$3.75
Canada $4.95)

March 1995
Number 51

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

5th Anniversary

The Problem With Communitarianism

J. Budziszewski

Time for Utopia? An Exchange

Patrick Glynn / Glenn Tinder

The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind

Grant Wacker / Keith Pavlischek / J. Daryl Charles / Robert Wuthnow

A Dutch Master and the Good Life

Philip Bess

Forgetting We Are Not God

Václav Havel

Opinions and Reviews: The First Five Years • Tell Me a Story Line
Where Is the West? • Peter J. Leithart • Tomás Halík
Phillip E. Johnson • Brian C. Anderson • Thomas F. X. Noble

0 73361 64655 2 03

Richard John Neuhaus

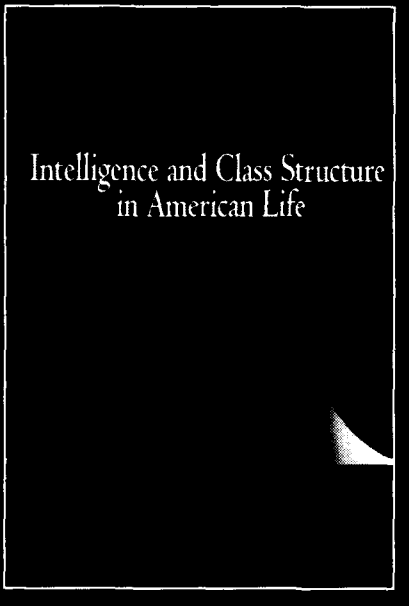
The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Is Charles Murray now "the most dangerous conservative?"

***The New York Times* is worried: "has he gone too far?"**



How to get this massive 847-page, $30 volume

FREE

Up to $30 in stores – yours **FREE**

Why? Because Murray and the late Richard Herrnstein prove something threatening to Politically Correct Liberalism:

> Intelligence – not environment, poverty or education – is at the root of our worst social problems. And intelligence differs among identifiable groups in society.

No, the authors do not conclude that racial differences in IQ are necessarily genetic. But they do show that IQ is the crucial factor in determining one's status in life, and must therefore be central to social policy. Years of concealing this hard fact have yielded massive social problems – built on a lie. And while specific remedies may be debatable, "there is no major domestic issue for which the news we bring is irrelevant."

- IQ and crime ... illegitimacy ... divorce ... welfare ... unemployment
- Group IQ averages and educational achievement compared: whites, blacks, Asians, Latinos, Jews, males, females
- Reality vs. hype: the failure of Head Start and other preschool programs to raise IQ and academic performance
- How an expanding federal government harms those with low IQs. What society can do – and once did – to help the less intelligent
- Myth: IQ tests are culturally and racially biased. Their uncanny ability to predict academic achievement and job performance, based on decades of evidence
- How "heritable" is IQ? The contribution of environment and education
- Do environment and history account for the poor performance of blacks in American society?
- How affirmative action actually hinders black achievement
- The emerging white underclass: low intelligence, low morals, low income – and a social time bomb
- The best preschool program for maximizing IQ: loving parents, healthy families. Reasons
- *The coming "custodial state": a chilling picture of a probable future*

Cause of the breakdown: declining morals.
Cure: return to the old ways

The conclusion is inescapable: traditional morals – reinforced in law, popular culture and social policy – must guide the kind of decisions that make sense for all people, whatever their IQs. The alternative is a new, horrible brand of class warfare. And, maybe, complete social breakdown.

"Inflammatory. Some will say it should have been left unpublished. Others will praise the courage of the authors. It will infuriate many. It will persuade others. In my personal view the book, right or wrong, will influence the agenda for public policy debates for years to come." – J.W. Michaels, Editor, FORBES.

How The Club Works

Every 4 weeks (13 times a year) you get a free copy of the Club Bulletin which offers you the Featured Selection plus a good choice of Alternates – all of interest to conservatives. * If you want the Featured Selection, do nothing: it will come automatically. * If you don't want the Featured Selection, or you do want an Alternate, indicate your wishes on the handy card enclosed with your Bulletin and return it by the deadline date. * The majority of Club books are offered at 20-50% discounts, plus a charge for shipping and handling. * As soon as you buy and pay for 3 books at regular Club prices, your membership may be ended at any time, either by you or by the Club. * If you ever receive a Featured Selection without having had 10 days to decide if you want it, you may return it at Club expense for full credit. * Good service. No computers! * The Club will offer regular Superbargains, mostly at 70-90% discounts plus shipping and handling. Superbargains do NOT count toward fulfilling your Club obligation, but do enable you to buy fine books at giveaway prices. * Only one membership per household.

CONSERVATIVE BOOK CLUB

33 Oakland Avenue • Harrison NY 10528

Please accept my membership in the Club and send, free and postpaid, the $30 ***BELL CURVE*** by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein. I agree to buy 3 additional books at regular Club bargain prices over the next 18 months. I also agree to the Club rules spelled out in this coupon.

FT • 49

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

March 1995 / Number 51

CORRESPONDENCE 2 Letters on "Killing Abortionists: A Symposium," Wolfhart Pannenberg's analysis of Christianity and the West, Classical Anglicanism, Peter Berger's sense of humor, etc.

EDITORIAL 11 Putting First Things First

THIS TIME 14 *James Nuechterlein* Tell Me a Story Line

OPINION 16 *Peter J. Leithart* The Politics of Emma's Hand
Tomás Halík Freedom and the Unknown God
Peter L. Berger Where Is the West?

ARTICLES

22 *J. Budziszewski* The Problem With Communitarianism

27 *Patrick Glynn / Glenn Tinder* Time for Utopia? An Exchange

35 The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind: A Symposium
Grant Wacker, Keith Pavlischek, J. Daryl Charles, Robert Wuthnow

42 *Philip Bess* A Dutch Master and the Good Life

DOCUMENTATION

47 *Václav Havel* Forgetting We Are Not God

BOOKS 51

Phillip E. Johnson The Soul of the American University by George M. Marsden, and Faith and Knowledge by Douglas Sloan
Thomas F. X. Noble Empire to Commonwealth by Garth Fowden
Brian C. Anderson In Defense of Political Reason: Essays by Raymond Aron, edited by Daniel J. Mahoney; . . . *and* Briefly Noted

THE PUBLIC SQUARE 66 A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life
Richard John Neuhaus
This Month: The First Five Years, *etc.*
Poetry by *John Martin* (13, 50), *Ashley Mace Havird* (21)

Editor-in-Chief: *Richard John Neuhaus*
Editor: *James Nuechterlein*
Managing Editor: *Matthew Berke*
Associate Editor: *J. Bottum*
Poetry Editor: *Jill P. Baumgaertner*
Publisher: *Institute on Religion and Public Life*
Publishing Service: *Publishing Management Associates*

First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life (ISSN #1047-5141) is published monthly (except for combined issues June/July and August/September) for $29 per year by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: send address changes to First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life, P.O. Box 3000 , Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. **Editorial Offices:** The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. **Editorial Phone:** (212) 627-1985. **Advertising Offices:** 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108. **Advertising Phone:** (815) 398-8569. **Subscription Department:** P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. 1-800-783-4903. Unsolicited material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient return postage. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 2020 Superior Street, Sandusky, OH 44870. Copyright © 1995 by The Institute on Religion and Public Life. All rights reserved. Produced in the USA.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST THINGS

FIRST THINGS is published by Religion and Public Life, an interreligious, nonpartisan research and education institute whose purpose is to advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society. RPL also sponsors scholars conferences, consultations, research projects, public educational events, and a fellows program.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Peter Berger
Midge Decter
Stanley Hauerwas
Gertrude Himmelfarb
David Novak
Michael Novak
George Weigel

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Hadley Arkes
Walter Berns
James Burtchaell
David Dalin
Thomas Derr
Jean Bethke Elshtain
James Finn
Ernest Fortin
Suzanne Garment
Mary Ann Glendon
Bruce Hafen
Carl F. H. Henry
Russell Hittinger
Leonid Kishkovsky
Glenn Loury
George Marsden
Gilbert Meilaender
Max Stackhouse

Correspondence

On Killing Abortionists

The symposium "Killing Abortionists" (December 1994) saddens me. There are two things wrong with it: (1) The participants, even when they regard the killing as wrong, fail to recognize that Paul Hill is an extension of themselves and that they are in no position to condemn him. (2) Such a topic is not a fit subject for a symposium in a respectable journal. I am embarrassed to have visitors see it in my house.

One of the participants, Hadley Arkes, suggests that unless the media would have been willing to condemn as religious zealotry a Jewish assault on Auschwitz guards they have no right to call Hill a "religious zealot." If any of you feel that you are in the same position as Auschwitz inmates then I suppose you must act accordingly, and may God help America. . . .

I believe that the acquisition of a soul is a gradual process, developed in the evolution of the human species. But I know that the question is not decidable, and I will not argue it. For the several years that I have subscribed to First Things I've found that your ability to address the most important subjects in human thought has been limited by your obsession with abortion. Sadly, therefore, I will not renew.

Robert F. White
Media, PA

Paul Hill, in my opinion, did wrong in killing an abortionist and his bodyguard. Because his act was highly unlikely to stop any abortions, as opposed merely to delaying them, that act was morally unjustified. In order to save any lives, Paul Hill needed to affect the choices of those mothers who planned to kill their unborn children that day, and violence alone offered them no support for a pro-life change of heart.

Yet fair and rational people may well disagree with me here. The life of a dying person or of a death row inmate may be defended with lethal force under our law, even though the utilitarian gain may be only a few days of continued existence. If we condemn a deadly defense of such persons, it could be argued, we strip them of their equal human dignity.

Paul Hill, then, is not someone beyond the pale. On the contrary, he is someone who has remained heroically faithful to reason and to the truth of human equality—at the probable cost of his own life. Regardless of our moral disagreements with him and of our shared dismay at the political consequences of his act, shouldn't we be truthful enough to stand with him against a fundamentally unjust legal regime?

A brave and good man is about to be martyred in Florida. We ought all to be there with him, at least in spirit.

Richard Stith
School of Law
Valparaiso University
Valparaiso, IN

I was glad to see the issue of killing an abortionist openly addressed but deeply disappointed in the symposium. There appeared to be a strong hesitation to confront the vital issues head on. . . .

Hill's stated basis for killing the abortionist was that "Whatever force is legitimate in defending a born child is legitimate in defending an unborn child."

Very few would quarrel with the principle that an attack on a born child merits whatever coercive force is necessary to protect that child. Hill offered a basis upon which he could be challenged and shown to be wrong (a rare bit of courtesy). It did not appear to me that anyone successfully disproved his principle. Most in the symposium did not even seriously attempt to do so.

I would like to respond briefly to some of the relevant issues. There is first the assertion that Hill's vigilante action violates the legal integrity of America as a law-abiding nation that follows due process.

In 1962 the U.S. Supreme Court told God that He could no longer talk to our children in tax-funded schools, and our children that they could no longer talk to Him. The Court thereby in an official act of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

government dismissed God from service as our sovereign. As a nation we are no longer His people, He is no longer our God. Most of us stood around and said nothing—not in the name of truth, but in the name of an irrational pseudo-pluralism.

That makes the government of the United States an outlaw government that has lost its right to rule. That rebel status has been reasserted and confirmed over and again by further Court decisions. We no longer consider ourselves under the only sovereign that can give *any* government its authority to obligate other human beings to obedience.

When in the early 1970s the Court settled *Roe v. Wade*, it established itself in a tyrannical manner as the decider between life and death of a class of persons, all those in the womb, implicitly telling us that it, the Court, has the authority of God to decide who is a person and who is not. A whole class of human beings were declared nonpersons and therefore disposable at will. . . .

We are no longer a nation under God, and, as a result, we are no longer a nation of due process. The baby in the womb will receive no protection of constitutional law in our courts. We are not a nation of due process, we are a tyranny. The fact that the institutions of due process limp along pretending only helps us maintain our self-deception. . . .

If that abortionist had been on his way, Uzi in hand, to murder all the children in a given school building, all the parents in town would have surrounded that school armed with whatever weapon they could lay hands on. It is empty for us to say that, because the Supreme Court has said so, the children in the womb deserve no protection of law, and if necessary, of the combined volunteer citizenry, as would the children in the school.

It is empty to say that vigilante law promotes violence—which, of course, it can. The vigilante violence, however, is being promoted already on a scale that diminishes Mr. Hill's actions into insignificance. Government runs by violence and/or threat of violence. That is the nature of government. But when government turns legitimately directed violence to ungodly ends, it is indeed the right and duty of citizens to resist a clear and present evil.

If there was no other effective way to preserve the life of those children than to take the life of the would-be assassin, then by the above reasoning, Mr. Hill is not guilty of any crime punishable by law. He acted in defense of other persons whom he, and everyone else around, had good reason to believe were going to be killed by the abortionist. . . .

(The Rev.) Earle Fox
Ambridge, PA

In regard to your symposium on killing abortionists, it seems to me a shame that Oliver Stone is not pro-life. By now he would have discovered a Grassy Knoll in the Paul Hill case, proved beyond a doubt that pro-abortionists and the CIA were behind the whole thing, and have produced a movie starring Kevin Costner as Paul Hill and Jack Nicholson as the abortionist.

Alice Haney
Rialto, CA

While I by no means would openly advocate the killing of abortionists, I am not at all sure what actually motivates this decision. On the one hand, I placate myself with elaborate appeals to order, sanctity of life, democratic due process, etc. I seem to fear an all-out slaughter would be precipitated if this idea were to be widely accepted. Indeed, as Francis Canavan observes, where would this taking of the law into one's hands wind up? Any zealot could justify the murder of his ideological or religious nemesis as an enemy of the people and humanity. Under such circumstances, a nation under siege by various ideological and religious enemies is not difficult to foresee.

The rule of law must be respected for the good of all, I say to myself. Yes, that is why the killing of abortionists must not be tolerated. This is an argument that must be won by prayer, reason, and appeals to decency. Yes, that is why we must not do such things. We are civilized and such things are beneath us as Christians. We must not fight evil with evil, but fight evil with good. That is why I write letters and pray and appeal the case according to our democratic traditions. That is why I don't kill abortion doctors.

Or is it? Perhaps I am just a moral coward spinning philosophical and legal excuses for not doing what plainly ought to be done. If that were me and my wife or children waiting to be slaughtered for some legally sanctioned reason, would I not consider the man who stepped between us and our horrific deaths a hero? Even if such a person ultimately fails and the slaughter proceeds, is not that person still a hero? Contrary to Frederica Mathewes-Green, the analogy is perfectly legitimate. First, the murder is a defense of the unborn, not an attack. Second, the point that "as long as abortion is legal you won't be able to save babies without saving their mothers" holds just as well if abortion is illegal. The determined mother will find a way. Therefore, why make it illegal? You inadvertently fall into the pro-choice argument. Third, whether society sees the abortionist as a criminal is irrelevant. Such reasoning accepts as legitimate the wholesale murder/genocide of Jews, Kulaks, enemies of the people, etc. . . .

As much as I respect those who wrote in opposition to the murder of abortionists, I cannot help but think that all they have done is supply us with legal and moral justification for cowardice. What did the Jews think as they were dragged off? What did the Kulaks think as they were murdered? What did the American black think as he was lynched? What did the Chinese dissidents think as Mao Tse-tung's sycophants murdered them? If we truly believe that the child in the womb is every bit as much a person as a child outside the womb, can there really be any legitimate excuse for not employing deadly force? If that child could speak and articulate from its mother's womb, would it not be hysterically screaming and pleading for help, and those screams be falling on deaf ears as we natter on about legal, moral, and philosophical niceties?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Alas, the pro-life movement is faced with a conundrum. Either we insist upon the unborn child as a person with all the legal rights of an adult, including the right to expect assistance in the defense of its life, or we fold up our tents and concede that the child in the womb cannot expect the same legal and moral considerations as the child already born.

I haven't the time or the inclination to debate every legal, moral, or philosophical argument your contributors have lobbed across the net, but one common thread does run through them all. They all provide justification for inaction so that people like myself can sleep comfortably and not feel cowardly for not giving all to stem the slaughter of the innocents.

One more point if I may. A few of your contributors noted that not all democratically nonviolent means have been exhausted. That statement is ridiculous. All other means for that child, that morning, have been exhausted. Everything is in place and the murder is about to commence. The life of that child is in imminent, undeniable danger. What but violence offers any hope of turning back the hand of the abortionist? Notwithstanding God's final judgment, there is no other day, no other time, for these babies to be rescued.

Eric A. Voellm
Coxsackie, NY

. . . This reader was gripped by the three strands of argument articulated by the various writers. The contrasts between individualistic justice (read: anarchy) and legitimate governments were well-stated. The appeals to and applications of Just War theory were convincing. And surely your Christian readers were drawn to the scriptural references and applications.

However, there was one important omission. Not one of the writers probed the significance or the consequences of the actions of Paul Hill as they relate to final destinies, opportunity for repentance and faith, or the exclusive role of God in offering salvation and/or meting out judgment to murderers.

Let me explain. Paul Hill now enjoys something he denied his victim. Hill has the opportunity to thoughtfully consider his past actions in the context of legal guilt, punishment, and eternity. Perhaps the symposium itself will give him cause to reflect upon his sins and his crimes. He may choose to repent (or not), but he will have numerous opportunities prior to his own execution to call out to God for forgiveness, for understanding, for mercy—even for justice if that really is the way he sees it. But Dr. Gunn's opportunities were killed along with his body on that fateful day.

The greatest tragedy is not that Hill usurped the authority of the State but that he usurped the throne of Heaven. Hill's actions consigned Dr. Gunn to the eternal liabilities of the justice and judgment of God by denying Gunn further opportunity to repent of his own sins against God and crimes against nature. . . .

(The Rev.) F. Michael Womack
Erwin, TN

. . . On the matter of Paul Hill's violence, can we really be sure that it did not stimulate a beneficial elementary reconsideration for the meaning of killing in the minds of many normally given to pushing the A word out of their minds? Undoubtedly, his death sentence will force that sort of pro-abortion progressivist, hateful of capital punishment, to consider the real meaning of attempting to preserve the life of a single human being.

Ultimately, I agree that the killing of abortionists probably lacks proportionality. But given that we've reached that point in our dying civilization where debate often means unopposed "pro-choice" indoctrination in public forums, public schools, and many if not most "Catholic" schools, can we at least consider that among the subtle antecedents of moral entropy might be the accommodationism inherent in an "agree to disagree but not be disagreeable" public posture?

Edward J. Baker
Flushing, NY

I have read with interest your symposium on killing abortionists. There, many pro-life leaders argued against the premise stated by killer Paul Hill: "Whatever force is legitimate in defending a born child is legitimate in defending an unborn child."

The reasoning of many of the symposium participants is weak, and inadvertently strengthens Hill's case. Dr. Bernard Nathanson described the heroism of two men who successfully assassinated one of the Nazi architects of the Final Solution. Nathanson said that Hill's position was not quite the same thing, but didn't explain the difference, if any. Cardinal O'Connor also said we're not yet as bad as Nazi Germany, because we still elect our legislators and chief executive. Recall that Hitler won election as leader of Germany. . . .

The chilling thing about this entire symposium is that, on the level of *logic alone,* Hill's premise *wins* the argument. Not one of your commentators addressed the question "What should I do to protect this particular child on this particular day?" . . .

The finest comment on the whole Paul Hill affair was stated quite simply by Pat Mahoney, the #2 man in Operation Rescue, who said, "If I had been there, I would have stepped in front of that gun." Mahoney understands what it takes to love babies: a totally unselfish commitment to share their vulnerability, even to the point of dying as they do, inconvenient, ignored, and abandoned.

That is the way of the Cross. That's Christianity. Every other "solution" to the abortion problem just perpetuates the cycle of violence.

Tom Sheahen
Derwood, MD

. . . Bernard Nathanson gives an absurd justification for the killing of Reinhard Heydrich by Czech partisans: "to act as protectors of the European Jews." In May 1942 the Holocaust was mostly in the future and the role of Heydrich in planning it little known. In any case, Heydrich had a full-time job governing the Czechs: it was a matter of pure conjecture what part, if any, he might eventually play in the Holocaust. As history proved, Heydrich was easily replaceable, and his death did not interfere with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mass killing.

In the light of subsequent events, it is at least debatable whether killing Heydrich was a good idea. To the extent any justification can be found for it, the justification would be that there was a war going on, the Czechoslovak government-in-exile participating in a just war against Nazi Germany on the side of the Allies. The brutal oppression of the Czechs by Heydrich was certainly criminal enough to deserve retaliation as a part of the war effort.

Mr. Nathanson identifies the killers of Heydrich as "two non-Jewish Czechs." Well, he is 50 percent right. Kubis was a Czech; Gabcik (whom you misspell as "Gabeik") was a Slovak.

Ernest L. Fraser
Long Beach, CA

Debating Pannenberg

In his "Christianity and the West: Ambiguous Past, Uncertain Future" (December 1994), Wolfhart Pannenberg makes the observation that religion came to be excluded from public life in the West as a result of the divisive European wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It follows, he says, that religion cannot be restored to public life "without ecumenical reconciliation among the Christian churches."

But he does not expect that the Christian churches will become one in faith through their ecumenical efforts; instead he expects that each of them will in a certain sense relativize its faith. Each should recognize "the provisional character of our knowledge of God in His revelation"; each should repent of the sin of conflating the absolute truth of God's revelation with its own credal formulations, which should apparently be thought of as merely human efforts that will always remain in need of revision. On this relativizing basis the Christian churches will be ready to learn from each other, and indeed to learn from "alternative understandings of reality." This already enables them to practice a kind of tolerance that is new in Christian history. It is also a tolerance that will enable Christians to exert a beneficent rather than a divisive influence on public life.

Many Catholic readers, as well as other Christian readers, will have more than one difficulty with this way of grounding religious tolerance. While they quite recognize the distinction between God's truth and our human understanding and expression of it, they will wonder whether Pannenberg—at least to judge from this essay—rightly understands the participation of the latter in the former, and whether he does justice to the initiative that the spirit of God takes in securing this participation. They can only be pained at the length to which he seems to go in belittling the fundamental difference between Christians and Jews.

But they also have another problem with Pannenberg, the discussion of which preeminently belongs in the forum provided by First Things. Insofar as he does succeed in showing something merely provisional in Christian faith, it is not "the imperative of tolerance" that he establishes. If I have more to learn from you than I had thought, then *it is not tolerance but rather simple reasonableness* that leads me to listen to you. Tolerance is a way of dealing with disagreements, or it is nothing at all. If Pannenberg is saying that Christians have declared disagreements with each other prematurely and that they should now learn to think in terms of both/and rather than either/or, then he has passed from tolerance to another topic.

And so the question arises for such readers: if they cannot agree with Pannenberg's way of grounding religious tolerance, how do they for their part go about grounding it? They no more want to return to the religious wars of the seventeenth century than he does, and they agree with much that he says about the ecumenical basis of a renewed presence of Christianity in public life. What alternative theology of tolerance can replace the one of Pannenberg?

Look at the Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Liberty, which

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND

the annual

ERASMUS LECTURE

"A Jew in Anti-Christian America"

presented by

MIDGE DECTER

Thursday, April 27, 1995
at 6:00 p.m.

Union League Club
38 East 37th Street
New York City

For free ticket(s) (please indicate one or two), write:

1995 Erasmus Lecture, Religion and Public Life
156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

affirms the right of non-Catholics in Catholic countries to profess their faith publicly, and to invite others to join their communion. It is a teaching that in effect repudiates the idea of a confessional state. I understand that soon after the Declaration was promulgated by the Council, the Catholic Church both in Spain and in Columbia had to modify its legal standing, and in particular to give up the special privilege whereby only the Catholic religion could act in the public realm. Clearly, there can be no renewal of confessional wars on the basis of this teaching of Vatican II about religious toleration.

And what is this teaching based on? The Declaration contains not a word about the merely provisional character of the creed of the Church, not a word about the difference between revelation as it issues forth from God and revelation as it arrives at the human hearer. *It is instead based on the dignity of the human person, who can receive revelation authentically only if he receives it freely and without any coercion.* The Council gives not a relativist account of religious liberty, but a personalist account of it. It shows us how to justify tolerance without weakening the truth claims of the Christian faith. . . .

God does not exercise tolerance because of some defect in His understanding of His own truth, or because some human beings will offer explanations of His revelation that complete what is lacking in His own provisional understanding of it. He abstains from coercion only because He wants to be freely chosen and freely loved by His creatures. In other words, Pannenberg's account of religious tolerance, even if it were an account of tolerance, which I deny, still holds only for our human tolerance but can throw no light at all on the divine tolerance. The personalist account of tolerance, by contrast, holds equally for human and divine tolerance.

John F. Crosby
Franciscan University
of Steubenville
Steubenville, OH

Wolfhart Pannenberg's look at Christianity's cultural entanglements through the ages was most interesting, though I was surprised at his imperative call for ecumenical unity. His arguments in that case seem to turn on two mutually antagonistic poles: papal ambition was the principal cause of much of the tragedy of the Middle Ages and a modern day ecumenism is necessary to reestablish cultural plausibility.

I, for one, take comfort in the fragmented power structures that represent Christianity today. It is our number one safeguard against an all-powerful oligarchy once again attempting to gather more power and influence unto itself. Pyramids of power and influence inevitably attract men (and women) who are interested in power and influence. Ambitions easily become inflamed, thereby recreating the conditions that led to the tragedies of the Middle Ages. We have seen evidence enough in our own day of how the trappings of corporate churchdom have corrupted their creators.

We need more prophets from the wilderness willing to live on locusts and wild honey while proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord. An ecclesiastical UN would be ages in the building and inevitably degenerate into a cockpit for the self-serving and the ambitious. John the Baptist is still a much more authentic and plausible representative of the Savior than any world body speaking from its carpeted and air-conditioned ecumenical headquarters.

Maynard Nordmoe
Knoxville, TN

Professor Pannenberg is to be commended for his attention to the dimensions and sources of Christian intolerance, and for pointedly reminding us that our understanding of God's Truth is "always provisional and . . . partial." That reminder should be both premise and qualifier for all who presume to address religious matters. Equally, I valued his comments about the consequences of the early dissociation of Christians from Jews, about how Christian eschatological consciousness led to dogmatism and exclusivism, and about how liberty, without religion, "degenerates into license and coercion." Each is a point that deserves frequent expression. . . .

However, I do not see the consistency in the view expressed that, first, "The separation of church and state must never mean the separation of religion from public life," and, subsequently, that "The further the secularist dominance of the general culture advances, the more clearly the Church, in clear distinction from that culture, emerges as the reference point of Christian existence." Elsewhere Professor Pannenberg suggests that ecumenism, human rights advocacy, Christian ideas of freedom—and more—allow at least cautious optimism for the "resurgence of a culture inspired by Christian values" as we approach the beginning of the third millennium. So why then is not a Christian culture, one informed by values and recognizable roots in our Judeo-Christian origins, a plausible alternative not only to the prevailing secular culture we now find ourselves in but also to "the ecclesial form of Christianity" envisaged by Professor Pannenberg? At the very least, the place for this "ecclesial Christianity" within the broader culture needs to be more clearly articulated. Surely a retreat to an ecclesial form of Christianity is not the answer.

Robert W. Heywood
Flint, MI

Is Rome the Catholic Church?

I found myself wonderfully enjoying FIRST THINGS but was just a bit amused by one comment of Alan Jacobs in "The Second Coming of C. S. Lewis" (November 1994). When he termed Lewis "something of an Ulster Prot" for describing the followers of the Church of Rome as "Papist," he betrayed a certain lack of understanding of the classical Anglican position that Lewis embraced at the time that he became a Christian. It is no secret that J. R. R. Tolkien was more than a bit miffed at Lewis when upon his conversion he rejected the Roman position. But Lewis was too much of the classical scholar and the pragmatist to buy the Roman claims that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Why Are Catholics Walking In the Dark?



The Vatican thunders against abortion, tyrants, illicit sex, consumerism, dissenting theologians, disobedient priests and nuns, and more. But walk into your average parish. Where's the beef? We get crumbs — and platitudes. We don't hear much, if anything, about the Church's teachings on abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, pre-marital sex, pornography, the indissolubility of marriage — "too controversial." Birth control and Hell are taboo subjects. Pop psychology and feel-good theology are "in." Sin is "out," prompting one to wonder why Christ bothered to get crucified.

Cowardly clerics, fearful of being politically incorrect or challenging the flock or offending some stray soul, keep the full Catholic message from us. In effect we're blindfolded — left to stumble in the dark, prey to false prophets and the sirens of the world, not even knowing why we're Catholic.

How long is American Catholicism going to censor itself, bow down before an alien culture?

We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, a monthly magazine edited by lay Catholics, say: Enough!

We refuse to turn the wine of Catholicism into the water of religious humanism. No wonder *Newsweek* calls us "cheeky"! We support the Magisterium, yet we're also ecumenical — engaging non-Catholics at the highest common denominator of faith, not the lowest. Many of the finest Catholic and non-Catholic intellectuals have appeared in our pages: Walker Percy, Jean Bethke Elshtain, John T. Noonan Jr., Peter Kreeft, Christopher Lasch, John Lukacs, Sheldon Vanauken, Avery Dulles. No wonder the *Los Angeles Times* calls us "influential." We hold high the banner of orthodoxy, but don't slight the demands of social justice. No wonder *Utne Reader* calls us "surprisingly original."

If you're a Catholic with the guts to really be Catholic, or a Catholic who's ready to have his spine stiffened, or if you're just a curious non-Catholic, subscribe today!

(Please allow 2 to 8 weeks for delivery of first issue)

SPECIAL DISCOUNT RATES FOR FIRST-TIME SUBSCRIBERS

- ☐ One-year subscription. . . . . .$14 (regularly $19)
- ☐ One-year student, unemployed, or retired person's subscription . . . . . .$12 (regularly $16)
- ☐ Two-year subscription . . . . .$23 (regularly $35)
- ☐ One-year non-U.S. subscription . . . . . US$24 (regularly $29) Payment must be drawn in U.S. Dollars
- ☐ Sample copy. $3.50

NAME (Please print or type)

STREET ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP CODE

Send coupon or letter. Make check payable to NEW OXFORD REVIEW. Mail to:

NEW OXFORD REVIEW
Room 887
1069 Kains Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94706

PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have been rejected by Anglicans both before and after the Reformation.

While classical Anglicanism has always been quite charitable toward the Roman Church, it has refused to accept its description of itself as "The Catholic Church." For Anglicans, Catholicity is determined by the famous definition of St. Vincent of Lerins, *quad ubique, quod semper, quod ad omnibus* ("that which has been taught everywhere, always, and by all") the acceptance of which pushes Rome outside the definition. And that well before the papal definitions of the late nineteenth and twentieth century that elevated dogmas with no New Testament basis and completely unknown to Christians of the first four centuries to the status of being required for salvation. John Jewel made exactly this point in his famous sermon at St. Paul's Cross in the reign of the first and more glorious Elizabeth. He said, "If any learned man of our adversaries be able to bring any one sufficient sentence out of any old doctor or father or out of any old general council, or out of the Holy Scripture, or any one example out of the primitive church for the space of six hundred years after Christ, in proof of the specifically Romish doctrines and practices: I will go over to him."

Those of us who have retained our classical Anglican faith (although the *official* churches in the United States, Canada, and England have now apostasized) know that we retain and practice the faith that Lewis defended. . . .

(The Rev.) H. Lee Poteet
Fairfield, CA

Funny Fellow?

I can tell Peter Berger why "a number of readers" of FIRST THINGS mistook his August/September 1994 send-up of eco-feminism for the real thing: It was as dreary and heavy-handed as the real thing. However "savage" his attack may be, the satirist who means even just to get his point across, let alone win a few converts to the good fight, never takes the business so seriously as to forget to be funny.

I don't really think that the inventor of the Dating Information Kit needs to be told as much. I don't think either that the author of *A Rumor of Angels* needs to be reminded of comedy's deep value as a "signal of transcendence" (to employ his own fine phrase). Above all, I do not think our Peter really wants to be "off to Poco," there to double date with Aglaia Holt, Chelsea Rabinowitz-Hakamoto, and "a friend" of Chelsea's. It looks pretty obvious to me that the humorlessness of this crowd has begun to rub off on him.

I recommend a short sabbatical, holed up perhaps with some of those very writers (Swift, Thackeray, Muriel Spark) in whose company Mr. Berger, at the top of his form, may rightly be said to travel. I pray he will not devote his talent to dirges, elaborate maledictions, or worst of all, sociological analyses. . . .

Brawn Sullivan
Marysville, CA

For someone with so dreary-sounding a title (Director of the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture), Peter Berger has an antic sense of humor. I found his article in the December 1994 issue ("Reflections on the President's Underwear") hard to read, not that I mean it as negative comment. It is difficult to read anything in which almost every sentence requires the reader to throw back his head and guffaw. But the subtext of serious comment was also welcome.

I have long thought that laughter (or wit or humor, as you will) is one constituent of the "image and likeness" referred to in Genesis. Mr. Berger supports my thesis. . . .

Charles J. Sheedy
Woodhaven, NY

Patronizing?

I wholeheartedly agree with much of what James Nuechterlein says in "Some of My Best Friends" (December 1994). Certainly Catholics and Protestants are often "united by the imperatives of our common faith in a common cause." I rejoice with him as well that "we will almost certainly find regular occasions for making common cultural and religious arguments in public."

But there are disturbing evidences of an underlying patronizing attitude toward those who would not follow the path of his enlightened "quasi-ecumenism." The same attitude is present in those who would claim that religious differences are not rational, basic differences at all, but that differing religious perspectives are really just so many roads all leading to the same place, where, of course, the speakers have already arrived. The same attitude is present, unfortunately, in the declaration "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," with its theological and eschatological use of the word "convergence."

Mr. Nuechterlein patronizes Protestants with a statement such as: "For those traditionalist Protestants for whom Catholicism and Orthodoxy are not, *or at least not yet*, acceptable choices—well, we indulge in (mostly) improbable *hopes for reform* within our various churches" (emphasis added). Later he states that "the widespread opposition to the statement ["Evangelicals and Catholics Together"] suggests that not all minds have been changed." Obviously, Mr. Nuechterlein knows where we all are headed, and, but for our intellectual and spiritual obtuseness, we will all get there soon. But he patronizes Catholics as well with this statement, in the context of the one about Protestants just quoted: "[T]here are Catholics who cannot understand why Holy Mother Church should concern herself with schismatics," again with the implication that these poor folks may yet see the light. What he does not take into account is that many Protestants and Catholics believe that the Reformation really did happen, and that it happened because of real, down-to-the-very-roots-of-the-faith theological differences. And they believe, to the dismay and (often) the disdain of convergence-types, that the "other side" really is wrong.

Mr. Nuechterlein himself suggests that many of the (former) Protestants who have found a home in the Catholic Church went looking in the first place because they sensed that something had gone terribly wrong:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"[A]ll too many Protestants, in their habit of translating the faith into either the Social Gospel or indiscriminate niceness, had lost any grasp on justification at all." Likewise, many (former) practicing Catholics who have begun participating in Bible study groups in Protestant churches have, by their own admission, discovered the gospel of Jesus Christ, with its central theme of justification by faith alone, *for the very first time.*

Mr. Nuechterlein—along with the authors and signers of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together"—obviously has a view about "mere Christianity," and his view is that the deep theological differences between Protestants and Catholics will dissolve into it. To which I, and many Catholics and Protestants, say, "No thanks." These differences are deep, they matter, and we must continue, even as we find opportunities for common cause in the world, to persuade others of the truth as we know it to be.

Niel Nielson
Wheaton, IL

Orthodoxy Defended

The December 1994 issue of First Things made two references to the Orthodox Church that I must challenge.

In James Nuechterlein's otherwise excellent article "Some of My Best Friends," he writes of "a move of disheartened Protestants to Rome (or, more esoterically, to Orthodoxy)." Why "esoterically"? While not yet found in every village and county, there are *at least* several thousand parishes and half a million faithful (less conservative estimates range upward of two or three million) in North America. The transition from the languages of the immigrants to English is moving quickly and is complete in a great many parishes. We have many individual converts, some parishes have converted, and there are even several small denominations that have returned to the classical Christian faith. This year we marked the 200th anniversary of the landing of the first Orthodox missionaries in Alaska and are well past the 250th anniversary of the first Orthodox liturgy in North America. Publication of scholarly and popular books on Orthodoxy has skyrocketed and includes collections of testimonies by former Protestant ministers and seminarians who have embraced the Orthodox faith. So I repeat, why "esoterically"?

More troubling is the item "A Sense of Heightened Expectation" in The Public Square. It may be that the Vatican expects an imminent breakthrough in relations with the Orthodox Church, resulting in restoration of communion. If so, this is an entirely unrealistic expectation. Even *if* the question of "jurisdiction" were resolved—by which I presume you mean that the Vatican would recognize the patriarch of Constantinople

THE 1995 WHEATON THEOLOGY CONFERENCE
APRIL 20-22
EVANGELICALS &POSTLIBERALS
PITFALLS & POSSIBILITIES

We live in an age of profound cultural change, in which new categories and alliances are bound to arise. In theology, the liberal strategy is waning; evangelicals, meanwhile, enjoy statistical success but suffer an acute identity crisis. The emergence of the postliberal (or "Yale school") movement, with its emphasis on the biblical text and christocentrism, suggests what may turn out to be the most significant theological realignment in more than a century. Can evangelicals and postliberals make common confession? At this groundbreaking conference, key evangelical and postliberal thinkers will explore exactly how they agree—and disagree—on theological method, epistemology, Scripture, christology, ecclesiology and evangelism.

Plenary speakers include

GEORGE LINDBECK
ALISTER MCGRATH
GEORGE HUNSINGER

Cosponsors for the 1995 Wheaton Theology Conference are

WHEATON COLLEGE THEOLOGY DEPARTMENT
INTERVARSITY PRESS
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS
INTERVARSITY FACULTY MINISTRY

The conference site is Wheaton College. For registration information, write the Theology Department, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL 60187.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as a sort of junior pope with regional authority in the eastern Mediterranean and part of Eastern Europe—there would remain a number of serious and unavoidable questions: Will the Vatican renounce the unbiblical, illicit, and heretical addition of the *Filioque* to the Creed? Will Rome cease to deny the Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit and the Communion of the Precious Body and Blood of the Lord to infants? Will there be a renunciation of the Immaculate Conception and the erroneous Augustinian model of Original Sin? Will Rome agree that its primacy came from the decision of the Church, based on practical considerations, and not as a divine and eternal right? Will "papal infallibility" be renounced (or possibly be radically reinterpreted as the office of announcing and defending the conciliar consensus of the Bishops in union with their presbyters and faithful)? What of the debate over the Epiclesis and the place of the Holy Spirit in Eucharistic theology? One could also mention Purgatory, Limbo, indulgences, and surplus merits—debated now not with Protestants but with a Church that upholds the veneration and intercession of the Saints and prayers for the dead, but has always rejected the aforementioned Roman innovations.

Fr. Steven Sarafian
Green Bay, WI

Official Appreciation

On behalf of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), and in keeping with a resolution adopted by this Commission at its November 14-16, 1994 meeting, I want to express our appreciation to First Things for publishing "The Homosexual Movement: A Response by the Ramsey Colloquium" (March 1994).

In a most profound way this statement gets at the heart of the issue raised by the homosexual movement—"an extreme individualism, a call for autonomy so extreme that it must undercut the common good." This statement provides convincing philosophical and scientific grounds to refute the superficial but frequently repeated assertions that gay and lesbian advocates seek no more than an end to discrimination.

What is at stake in the contemporary debate is indeed a movement to change the very foundations upon which public life in our society is founded. Such a revolution ought indeed to be challenged—and this statement succeeds effectively in turning the agitation present in many circles today with respect to homosexual behavior, including those of churches and synagogues across our land, "into civil conversation about the kind of people we are and hope to be."

Samuel H. Nafzger
Executive Director, CTCR
The Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod
Saint Louis, MO

On Anencephalic Infants

As a Catholic, a cardiologist, and an ardent supporter of the pro-life position I take exception to the statements expressed by Paul C. Fox on the subject of anencephalic infants ("Babies and Body Parts," December 1994).

This argument simply does not concern the sensibilities of nursing staffs, or the fact that anencephalic births are uncommon, or that some have faulty organs unsuitable for transplant. The argument also does not have anything to do with the retarded, the brain damaged, Alzheimer victims, the aged, or those described as living in a "vegetative state." Let us be very clear on this. The argument concerns an embryologic disaster resulting in a biologic preparation without a cerebral cortex and without the potential of ever having one, so that any semblance of conscious life is forever foreclosed. The subject in question is no more human than an amputated extremity artificially perfused.

One may posit that a soul exists. Our tradition at least in times past deferred to Aristotle and Aquinas and their formulation that the soul operates through the agency of the brain, i.e., the brain is necessary but not sufficient for the operation of the soul. In the case at hand the brain by definition does not exist and never will exist in the temporal order. The fate of the soul in eternity is a matter not accessible to us.

Dr. Fox's position lacks balance as well as precision. There are infants born each year with congenital heart malformations so complex as to be beyond surgical remedy. The brain of such individuals is intact and if allowed to develop (heart transplantation) would be able to experience the full mystery of conscious life.

Slippery slopes can be negotiated as long as the proper distinctions are made and held. The AMA Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs has acted properly. The decision can be defended on both philosophic and theological grounds. Reflexively negative and tangential responses to all innovative efforts by the scientific community in this difficult area do not well serve the cause of the pro-life position.

Patrick J. McCormick, M.D.
Orland Park, IL

A Moving Account

I was deeply moved by Gilbert Meilaender's account of the reaction at Oberlin to his part in the statement regarding homosexuality by the Ramsey Colloquium ("On Bringing One's Life to a Point," November 1994). Aside from the questions of right and wrong and from any indignation toward the despicable extent to which "politically correct" dogmas have encroached on freedom and scholarship in institutions of learning, the very personal and devotional way he responded is commendable and exemplary. His self-effacing use of Psalms, his candor, his acknowledgment of the spiritual hazards in being persecuted, and his willingness to let these events drive him more deeply into his own faith were for me to bring my own "life to a point." Although I share his views, I would like to think I would have been similarly moved even if I did not agree with him. To fail to protest his treatment would seem to deny one a claim to courage or integrity.

(The Right Rev.)
C. FitzSimons Allison
Georgetown, SC

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST
THINGS
MARCH 1995

The following editorial appeared in the premier issue of this journal, March 1990.

Putting First Things First

"When in the course of human events . . ." Thus Jefferson and his associates, evincing a "decent respect to the opinions of mankind," began their explanation of what they were up to. To be sure, launching a new journal is not on a par with launching a new nation. Nor do we have any illusions that the whole of mankind will be paying attention to what we are up to here. But a decent respect for the opinion of those who do notice calls for a word of explanation.

This is a statement of editorial prejudices. Prejudices, rightly understood, are prior judgments. They are the considered assumptions that frame what we're going to do and how we're going to do it. We would be very unhappy if anyone thought us entirely open-minded. Our judgment that this or that is true and important inescapably prejudices us against judgments to the contrary.

At the same time, we do not expect that all our readers will share our prejudices. If everyone shared our prejudices, there would be neither purpose nor pleasure in launching a journal. Nor will our considered assumptions—about religion, public life, politics, economics, moral discourse, the arts, and how the world works—be evident in every article. Indeed, the purpose and pleasure of a journal is in engaging alternative assumptions.

Our prejudices will decide the arguments worth making, not the conclusions that writers reach. We fully expect that among our writers and readers will be believing Jews and Christians, agnostics, atheists, the politically liberal and conservative (with all the sub-categories attending both), and people with wildly divergent views of the civilization of which we are part. One thing we expect they will have in common, however. They are people who are persuaded, or are open to being persuaded, of the importance of religion to public life, and of public life to religion. That said, we offer a brief statement of editorial prejudices.

Religion and public life. The trick is in making the right connections between the two. And making the right connections requires a measure of clarity about what we mean by "religion" and what we mean by "public life."

Those meanings and connections have everything to do with the title of this journal. First Things means, first, that the first thing to be said about public life is that public life is not the first thing. First Things means, second, that there are first things, in the sense of first principles, for the right ordering of public life.

The first meaning of First Things is that, for the sake of both religion and public life, religion must be given priority. While religion informs, enriches, and provides a moral foundation for public life, the chief purpose of religion is not to serve public life. Here we discover a necessary paradox. Religion that is captive to public life is of little public use. Indeed, such captivity produces politicized religion and religionized politics, and the result, as we know from bitter historical experience, is tragedy for both religion and public life.

Religion best serves public life by relativizing the importance of public life, especially of public life understood as politics. Authentic religion keeps the political enterprise humble by reminding it that it is not the first thing. By directing us to the ultimate, religion defines the limits of the penultimate. By illumining our highest purpose all lesser purposes are brought under transcendent judgment.

That highest purpose can be variously defined, but believing Jews and Christians might agree that it was well defined in the answer to the famous opening question of the Westminster Catechism of 1647. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

question is, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer is, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." It is hard to improve on that. Temporal tasks are best conducted in the light of eternal destiny. Religion points us to the last things, framing the final direction that informs our decisions about life, both personal and public. The chief service of religion, then, is to teach us that the first things are the last things.

By religion and public life we mean something like what Saint Augustine meant by the City of God and the City of Man. The twain inevitably do meet, but they must never be confused or conflated. Whether at the beginning of the fifth century or at the end of the twentieth, the particulars of their meeting are always ambiguous. At the deepest level the two cities are in conflict but, along the way toward history's end, they can be mutually helpful. The polis constituted by faith delineates the horizon, the possibilities and the limits, of the temporal polis. The first city keeps the second in its place, warning it against reaching for the possibilities that do not belong to it. At the same time, it elevates the second city, calling it to the virtue and justice that it is prone to neglect. Thus awareness of the ultimate sustains the modest dignity of the penultimate.

It is our further prejudice that public life includes much more than politics. Public life means, first of all, "culture." Our subtitle could as well be "a journal of religion and culture," except that culture has come to have a narrower meaning in popular usage, referring mainly to what is done in theaters, concert halls, and museums. We will not ignore that cultural in that narrower meaning of the term, but by culture we mean something more inclusive. Culture means the available truth claims, explanatory systems, myths, stories, memories, loyalties, dreams, and nightmares by which society lives. Culture is the cognitive, moral, aesthetic, and emotive air that we breathe.

So we think it true to say that politics is, in largest part, an expression of culture, and at the heart of culture is religion. Politics is the effort to give just order to public life, employing the ideas made available by the culture. And the most communally binding of those ideas are by nature religious, whether or not they bear the label "religion." Given these considered assumptions, readers should not be surprised when in these pages they come across articles and arguments that are not ostensibly "religious" in the conventional use of the term. One does not always need to talk about God to be talking about God.

But there will also be talk about God. The intellectual, spiritual, and political fonts of our civilizational story are Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome. Modern thought, especially political thought, is notoriously neglectful of Jerusalem. This poses a particular problem for public discourse in our society. In the West, and most notably in America, the civilizational story is borne by and legitimated by the language of Jerusalem. If the American experiment in representative democracy is not in conversation with biblical religion, it is not in conversation with what the overwhelming majority of Americans profess to believe is the source of morality. To the extent that our public discourse is perceived to be indifferent or hostile to the language of Jerusalem, our social and political order faces an ever deepening crisis of legitimacy.

And so another prejudice must be made explicit. Especially in our high culture, it is taken as axiomatic that ours is a secular society or is rapidly becoming such. In our judgment, that proposition has everything going for it except the empirical evidence. For more than three centuries perceptive observers have been struck by the vitality and pervasiveness of religion in American life. Americans appear to be incorrigibly religious, and the evidence suggests that they are becoming more so. However skeptical we may be about the quality of that religion, to ignore it is to ignore one of the most salient facts about American life.

Religion comes in many forms: Islam, Native American, New Age, feminist witchery, novel versions of Eastern spiritualities, and the vague national piety called civil religion, to name a few. But again, for the overwhelming majority of Americans religion is, however inarticulately, biblical religion. For most purposes relevant to our purpose, that means Christianity and Judaism. We will pay careful attention to the manifold expressions of religion in America and the world. But this journal, like the Institute that is its publisher, is essentially a Jewish-Christian enterprise. The intention of the enterprise is to advance a religiously grounded public philosophy for this and other experiments in human freedom.

In our catalogue of prejudices, a free and democratic order includes pluralism. Pluralism is a much abused term. It is often suggested that, because we are a pluralistic society, we must play down our differences, pretending that our deepest differences make no difference. That, in our judgment, is not pluralism at all. It is the opposite of pluralism. It is the monism of indifference. Pluralism is not relativism, and it is the declared enemy of nihilism. Pluralism is the civil engagement of our differences and disagreements about what is most importantly true. Against the monism that denies the variety of truth, against the relativism that denies the importance of truth, and against the nihilism that denies the existence of truth, we intend to nurture a pluralism that revives and sustains the conversation about what really matters, which is the truth.

Recognizing the difficulties in fulfilling that intention, we take comfort from this story. Once in Chelm, the mystical village of the East European

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jews, a man was appointed to sit at the village gate and wait for the Messiah. He complained to the village elders that his pay was too low. "You are right," they said to him. "The pay is low. But consider: the work is steady."

These, then, are some of our prejudices. There are others, of course. We do not, for instance, think that intellectual seriousness is an excuse for being dull. Articles will be scholarly, but not pedantic; thoughtful, but not boring; often unusual, but not esoteric. We hope to attract a general, but literate, readership, well knowing that literacy is not so general as we might wish.

In these pages the reader will find items that report, analyze, instruct, warn, exhort, and sometimes entertain. But the key word is conversation. A real conversation, as distinct from intellectual chatter, is marked by discipline and continuity. Gilbert Keith Chesterton observed that "tradition is the democracy of the dead." Agreeing with that, we intend to take on the questions of today and tomorrow, but always in conversation with the best that has been thought and said in the past. At every historical moment, the contemporary is afflicted by the crippling conceit of its utter novelty. We hope First Things will be an antidote to that intellectual and moral disease.

When in the course of human events something new is launched, a decent respect for the opinion of others calls for a word of explanation. Of course this brief statement of what we're up to will be vindicated or falsified by this and subsequent issues of First Things. We very much hope that you will be a part of the continuing conversation, and we invite you to hold us to our word. FT

An American Egret in a Japanese Garden

Transported who knows why or whence
He was simply there one spring—
The bird who came to dinner and stayed.
Of course we couldn't help wonder about him.
What was that great regal marsh-dwelling creature
Doing there among the bread-begging mallards
In the tame little duckpond of the Japanese garden
At the city-run, hedge-clipped Brooklyn Botanic?
For what a presence he was, that snow-white fisherman
With the long golden beak and the black stick legs,
Whether preening his wind-riffled feathers
As he stood on his bright-orange water temple
(That pi-shaped torii that floated like a spirit),
Or flapping prehistorically across the pond
To stalk and stab in the dark water
Plucking with dagger bill a twitching minnow.
Then throwing his head back and staring sunward
Like a savage white priest offering a fish sacrifice.

But why did he stay and stay, week after week?
Was it to speak somehow for the fitness of things,
For that awful power that floats though unseen among us
Joining deep to deep, Japanese bird to Japanese garden?
"American egret," after all, was only his birdbook name;
In essence and epiphany he was the East:
Serene, contemplative, ceremonious, animistic.
He spoke even in the silence of his torii
(Japanese: bird-home; *tori,* bird, *iru,* to dwell).
Bird, angel, ancestral voice, he spoke in white flame,
Calling from the East, calling from Eden,
Calling in beauty to the lost children of Paradise.

John Martin

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THIS TIME

Tell Me a Story Line

James Nuechterlein

We are still sorting out the meaning of last November's election results. How significant was the GOP landslide? Was it, as Republicans insist, a momentous ideological turning point, or simply, as Democrats hope, an intense but momentary electoral outburst representing a trans-ideological frustration with politics in general and the vacillations and blunderings of the Clinton Administration in particular?

The election was clearly, in some sense, a repudiation of the Democratic Party: there is no getting around the fact that while no incumbent Republican Congressman, Senator, or Governor suffered defeat, Democrats went down all over the place. But the question remains—were the Democrats punished simply for their incompetence, complacency, and longevity, or were the voters issuing a broader ideological judgment against them?

If the former is the case, the proper historical analogy for this off-year election would be 1946, when the voters, frustrated with wartime restrictions, swept the Democrats from office only to return them to grace (and maintain them in the presidency) two years later. But if the latter analysis holds, we should look instead to 1930, where the Republican loss of Congress presaged a Democratic sweep of White House and Congress in 1932 and political domination for a long time thereafter. (There is always the possibility, of course, that neither precedent will hold.)

Only the clairvoyant would presume to offer a definitive judgment on the long-term significance of the election, but some useful clues can be found if one places the election in the larger perspective of American political history. As one who—prior to lapsing into a belated career as an ink-stained wretch—spent his entire adult life teaching and writing about American politics, I have a few modest suggestions.

If history is to be something more than the recounting of one damn thing after another, it needs an overarching theme, or story line. Survey courses of American history typically fall into two parts—from the colonial beginnings to the Civil War, and from after the Civil War to as close to the present as the instructor chooses to proceed. In both cases, the story line is read back from its climax to what preceded it, and those antecedent events are typically interpreted in light of their end point. Thus for the first part, reading back from its denouement in 1861-1865, the grand theme is the conflict between nationalism and sectionalism, and events prior to the firing on Fort Sumter are set in the framework of the gradually developing tensions between North and South.

The story line for the second part, with its continuously receding end point, is less precise and more subject to reinterpretation. But in most recent tellings it follows closely the outline of what might be called the progressive paradigm. The paradigm—whose defining historical moment was the New Deal—suggests that the story of modernity is the inevitable growth of big government in response to the imperatives of economic expansion and consolidation. The development of a complex national economy, in this view, required the counter-development of a federal authority equipped to manage macroeconomic conditions, regulate private business in the public interest, and provide a measure of security against the vagaries of industrial life.

From the premises of the paradigm flowed justification for ever-expanding powers of central government. The political pattern that followed from its determinist scheme moved from laissez faire to mild regulation to the welfare state to the planned economy to one or another form of socialism (though most American progressives preferred to speak vaguely of "social democracy" rather than of fully realized public ownership and control of the means of production).

The overarching story line dictated the interpretation of events and periods within it. Thus liberal episodes in the American past such as Populism and Progressivism, the New Deal and the Great Society, represented necessary adjustments to the unfolding nature of things, whereas conservative decades like the twenties, the Eisenhower fifties, or the Reagan eighties were aberrations—interludes, as they were often called—marking anachronistic protests against the grain of history. In the perspective of the progressive story line, liberals were by definition in the right, conservatives in the wrong (although, it was occasionally conceded, conservatives could serve history's purposes by "consolidating" previous liberal advances or even by restraining those liberals who sometimes moved faster than history, at a particular moment, allowed).

The paradigm prevailed for so long because it seemed so persuasive. Only the most blinkered libertarian, after all, could deny the progressive scheme altogether. Modern industrial development did tend to the growth of big government. Organization did breed counter-organization. The flaw in the paradigm issues from a subtle fallacy—the assumption that if, given modern conditions, some increase in government is not only good but necessary, then more of that necessary good thing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

must be even better. But that conclusion follows neither in logic nor in history.

Americans caught on to that lesson in the episode of the 1960s' Great Society. The Great Society represented the logical extension of the Depression-era New Deal into conditions of prosperity. But the Great Society was, all in all, a great debacle. It did not solve the social problems at which it threw huge amounts of money; it created debilitating habits of social dependency; and it provoked social divisions and unrests that still bedevil the nation. Big government had been granted its fullest American test and been found wanting. It did not work.

With the failure of the Great Society, the progressive story line began to fall apart. Richard Nixon's Watergate disaster hid that collapse for a considerable time—even as it induced amnesia over his crushing defeat of George McGovern's prototypical 1972 progressive candidacy—but Jimmy Carter's inept presidency (truly an "interlude") could not obscure the decay of liberalism any more than it could prevent the triumphant return of conservatism under Ronald Reagan.

It was Reagan who definitively broke the New Deal hold over the American mind, who brought to full awareness the inchoate intuition that big government was no longer unambiguously a good thing, that it was in fact at best problematic, at worst the unwitting source of our deepest problems. Suddenly the commonsense perception broke: it was the 1930s, with its unprecedented experience of economic catastrophe, that had been the aberration in the American experience—the twenties, the fifties, and the eighties had all, in their various ways, marked returns to the norm. It followed from that perception that a dominant free enterprise economy, undergirded by a safety net for the small minority who could not make it on their own, made more sense of the American experience than did visions of a collectivist social democracy. And so the story line of post-Civil War America got rewritten.

By appearing to turn away from the reappropriated story line—and by the curious bad luck of being President when the end of the Cold War brought international affairs into utter confusion and presumed irrelevance—George Bush for a moment conceded the political ascendancy to an opponent who won in the only way a contemporary Democrat could win: by running as a chastened and reformed neoliberal. But the Clinton presidency quickly ran aground on the rocks not so much of its incompetence as on the incoherence of its ideology. The President, it seems, is at any given moment a progressive or not depending on his audience, his mood, and the latest polls.

Enter Newt Gingrich and the new Republican majority's "Contract With America." Are the American people fully committed to the Contract's vision of where the nation should be headed? Of course not—no more than they were committed in the early days of the New Deal to the program put forward by FDR and his advisors. But they are, as they were, intrigued and encouraged by a determined political leadership sure of itself and of its understanding of the American experience. The GOP's new/old version of the national story line may or may not mark a significant political turning point. Much will depend, for instance, on who the party comes up with as a presidential candidate in 1996. But if you're going to bet against the 1994 election being such a turning point, you ought to get very long odds. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Opinion

The Politics of Emma's Hand

Peter J. Leithart

Sitting at the breakfast table one morning, Whittaker Chambers looked at the intricate design of his daughter's ear and felt inchoate stirrings of doubt about the atheistic foundations of Communist ideology. Following his example, I watch my daughter as she becomes aware of her hand and find confirmation of my rejection of the basic assumptions of secular democratic theory.

Like all babies, Emma Christine was thrown into the world with a lack of self-consciousness that extended even to her own body. She was, so my wife says, four weeks old before it dawned on her that her hand was attached to the end of her arm, and only later did she realize she could control its movements. Prior to these discoveries, her hand would flail about uncooperatively, hitting her on the head or leaving delicate fingernail scratches on her nose and cheeks. When the hand ventured within eyesight, Emma either ignored it or stared with what I surmise was the infantile equivalent of surprise, as if at an alien object. Even now, at four months, when I hold her before a mirror, she is not quite sure what to make of that pink thing in Daddy's arms.

Though oblivious to her own body, Emma rapidly began to respond to the presence of others. Incapable of recognizing her own reflection, she knows her brothers and sister and smiles (perhaps condescendingly) at their incessant coos and babbles. She searches the room for me when I speak, and her mother's voice induces hunger pangs. Simply put, Emma has been aware of others before becoming aware of herself. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, who developed a provocative grammatically based sociology, had it exactly right when he said that "I" is not, in real life, the first person. Before a child ever knows how to say "I," she is called "you." She is addressed long before she will be able to address anyone else.

The implications of this basic observation were completely lost on the framers of modern political thought. In John Courtney Murray's delightful sketch, Locke, and with him all Enlightenment political thinkers, believed that society was a product of artifice, not nature: societies exist only because autonomous individuals have agreed to live together for their mutual benefit. Prior to giving consent to form a community, Lockean man is a "sociological monad," a "little god almighty" whose freedom is unbounded except by the rights and freedoms of every other "little god almighty." Social contract theory assumes that the individual and his consent are metaphysically antecedent to the community.

Emma Christine refutes this whole ideology at a stroke. While she was certainly an individual human being from conception, her experience of others is prior to the development of any articulated or strong sense of individuality. Even—especially—in utero she was anything but an autonomous individual. Perhaps the best characterization of Lockean man is that he emerges fully formed, like Adam, without an umbilicus. The truth according to Emma is the opposite: society is natural and primordial; fully developed individuality is a product of the "artifice" we call nurture. Society is a given; the self is an achievement. Paradoxically, we become ourselves, and become aware that we are selves, only as we love, speak, and live with other selves.

The individualist bias of modern political philosophy is arguably a product of an even more fundamental theological error. According to Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas, Western theology has typically divided its teaching on the being and attributes of God from its teaching on His trinitarian character. Implied in the very structure of Western dogmatics is the assumption that God's unity is prior to, and more basic than, His communal nature. Zizioulas argues that it would be more faithful to Scripture and the Church Fathers to say that the communion of the three Persons *constitutes* the being of God. In the new metaphysics that developed as the Church wrestled with the revelation of God's character in Scripture, the communion of divine Persons came to be understood as a "*primordial* ontological concept and not a notion which is added to the divine substance or rather which follows it."

Though I think Zizioulas goes a bit off in saying that being and communion are identical, it is certainly fundamental Christian teaching to say they are inseparable and mutually determinative. What is true of God's nature, Zizioulas rightly goes on to suggest, is also true of mankind, made in the image of God. Human being too is necessarily communal being: "Outside the communion of love the person loses its uniqueness and becomes a being like other beings, a 'thing' without absolute 'identity' and 'name,' without a face."

The myth of Lockean man lives on, with enormous and disastrous social and political consequences. If Zizioulas is correct, the reduction of others to mere tools for my self-improvement is inherent in modern political thought. Surely the Enlighten-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment notion of autonomy is one of the seeds from which the current American obsession with self has grown. As Paul Vitz recently commented, we live in a nation of 260 million supreme beings. And each is a jealous god.

In the face of such powerful and deeply rooted centrifugal forces, we could do worse than to relearn the lessons of Emma's hand.

Peter J. Leithart *contributed "Toward a Post-Apollonian Theology" to our January issue.*

Freedom and the Unknown God

Tomás Halík

After the fall of the Iron Curtain the European nations went through a spell of intoxicating euphoria best described in the words of the Psalm: "When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream" (Psalm 126). Now we have awakened from the dream. The fleshpots of Egypt are as inaccessible as the sweet grapes of the promised land, and we are on our tiring and dangerous journey through the desert, where it is difficult to find one's way.

"I am not sure I know what a miracle is," said Václav Havel when he welcomed the Pope at Prague airport. But we have wearied of the miracle of freedom as the Israelites wearied of the bread that rained from the heavens. Enough of this meager food!

The prophets, where there are any, are bitterly disappointed by the people dancing round the golden calf. At such a time Moses, in anger and despair, broke the Tablets of the Commandments he had brought down from Sinai. Will the churches of the nations now going through their exodus succeed in defeating frustration and play their role as prophets and pastors?

In this new situation the churches, like Martha in the Bible, are "troubled by many things": the restoration of their institutions, the restitution of their property, the repair of buildings, and, above all, the manning of the greatest possible number of parishes with priests to ensure Holy Services for the believers. All these things are "needful" indeed. But we must not lose sight of the *unum necessarium*, the essential: to give the people prophets and pastors. From a biblical viewpoint, the pastor is one who knows how to get to an oasis—who can find the way to the springs. The prophet is one who can read the signs of the times, who sets the trend, because he can reveal the deeper meaning of the events we experience.

It is certainly a good thing for Christians to participate in ecological work and feel responsible for the preservation of creation. But a no less important task is the "human or social ecology" that John Paul II describes in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*: the responsibility for a world of values without which man cannot reach maturity and human civilization remains an unfinished structure, a place of confusion like the Tower of Babel. The pastor leads to the springs of values, and the prophet recognizes God's voice in pandemonium. Both are the servants of hope or, as Paul says, "work with you for your joy" (2 Corinthians 1:24).

The Czech writer and critic F. X. Salda called one of his books *God's Puppets and Workers*. For Salda's notion of "puppets" we would today probably use David Riesman's sociological category, the other-directed, those who merely react to external stimuli, who are manipulated by social pressure or live under the constraint of material needs. God's worker is one who works with a sense of responsibility for his task. "Real socialism," like the consumer society, produced puppets. Will the Church help to educate God's workers, creative and responsible people for a truly free society?

There is no longer any "first" or "second" world. There is only one Europe. While it may have seemed, immediately after the fall of the Berlin wall, that changes would simply occur in the East—with the West kindly greeting its liberated neighbors—it has now become obvious that what follows 1989 will radically alter both parts of our continent.

Compared to our own countries, the West has the big advantage of a longer experience of life in the kind of pluralistic democratic society that the new Europe will undoubtedly become. Thus the churches in post-Communist countries expect Western Christians openly to share with them their positive as well as their negative experience of this society. From some representatives of Western churches we only hear lamentations and warnings that are not much help. Are we to understand that these people do not perceive the positive side of the world they live in, that they are incapable of fulfilling God's gift and meeting the challenge of life in a free society? That they have understood this gift only as a threat and failed to accept it as a challenge and an opportunity?

On the other hand, Western Christians rightly expect the churches of the former Eastern bloc to share the fruit of their experience of persecution. If we try to play the part of martyrs who can redeem, or at least endlessly lecture and criticize, the "Godless West," we shall be unconvincing and ridiculous. In 1991 the European Synod of Bishops in Rome urged the Eastern and Western Christians to maintain a di-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

alogue and an "exchange of gifts." The first condition for a fraternal dialogue is not to set ourselves up as an example, or let ourselves be set up as such by others, but to respect one another's experience. I want to apologize to my Western brothers and sisters for those Christians of Eastern Europe who are obsessed with a martyrdom complex and grossly infringe this rule. We have, to be sure, had a number of martyrs, but they were far more humble.

The answer to the question of what is, in fact, the fruit of the time of persecution that the East should bring as a dowry to the European house is hard to formulate. We still don't know how to convey this experience, because it has not yet been sufficiently understood and articulated. We lack an essential instrument—theology. Sometimes in our countries theology is considered to be an almost superfluous luxury, or the occasion for dangerous squabbling. This is a bad mistake. Prophetic and pastoral service—if it is to be wise and responsible, if it is to lean on Scripture and tradition and remain free of human limitations, stereotypes, and prejudice—must include theology. Anti-intellectualism is non-catholic. Shallow "practicism" is the greatest snare. We need original, active, and honest theology, derived from our experience of faith and capable of communicating it.

A great witness of Christ, Czech theologian Joseph Zverina, who was jailed both under Nazism and communism and who laid the foundation of such a theology in our country, wrote: "Our repentance and prayers will give birth to a new theology which will not be merely teacher or tutor but will help to enhance the life of the community and bear witness. Its merit will be to enrich the believers' devotion and prayers." Elsewhere Zverina wrote that in his view the Church is not an ossified organization but is reborn again in every baptism and every community, and constantly grows and develops. To be the Church means to reach out for God's offer. To be the Church means to get people to recognize what they can and should be, to invite them to family, brotherhood, and the community of God.

This post-Gulag theology has been preserved in fragments and precious intuitions but has not yet been systematically worked through. Texts published as samizdat reveal its spirit. It is a dynamic ecclesiology that asserts confidence in a Church which, though weakened by persecution at the institutional level, is deeply experienced as *communio*. It did not become a self-pitying, closed-in ghetto, nor did it accept compromise and adaptation to the surrounding world and its power in order to survive. It endeavored to continue as a living and fraternal community and to offer an effective alternative not only to a political system based on an atheistic ideology but also to a world of superficial consumerism and escape from the great moral and spiritual battles of our time. It also rejected the shelter of the isolated garden of private piety.

Theologians of this trend—Zverina and Medr, as well as Tischner in Poland and many others—demonstrated in their thinking and attitude that "living in the truth" required of the Church a profound solidarity with all those who "seek truth and love freedom." In these words John Paul II praised this trend in the Czech Church and urged it to preserve this solidarity, and its close ties with the nation and its culture, in the new context of a free and pluralist society. Developments in the churches of post-Communist countries over the last few years confirm that this appeal is urgently needed.

A contemporary Western theologian maintains that the Second Vatican Council's "deepest intuition" was its recognition that the true renewal of the Christian presence in the contemporary world was not merely a renewal of piety, but a standing by the people and listening seriously to their joys and hopes, their woes and concerns. This is no facile *aggiornamento*, the loss of critical distance from the modern world and the denial of the vertical and spiritual dimension of life. On the contrary. The defense of these "marginalized values" belongs precisely to the "human ecology" that is an indispensable part of the prophetic and pastoral service of the Church in the world.

I am convinced that the fruit of the period of persecution of the Church under communism is not merely that the Christians have retained their faith. On the basis of their own historical experience of tribulation they were led to discover the importance of the solidarity advocated by the Council. In Poland the Church became a warm and open house in which the arts and free intellectual life could flourish, a meeting place in which intellectuals and workers were able to kindle the powerful Solidarity movement. In Bohemia the Church participated, though far more modestly, in the "parallel culture," the struggle for human rights and civic freedoms, and thus it gained the sympathy of at least some part of the intelligentsia and youth. In Russia, in an environment of dissident youth groups and samizdat, there grew up a spontaneous *ecumene* of Christians of different denominations.

It is crucial, therefore, to analyze seriously, critically, and without bitterness the real causes of the latter-day loss of these achievements. For the Church cannot live only by reference to its past successes. If the churches in post-Communist countries were now to react to the postmodern world—the world that the Central and East European countries joined in 1989—with the same pastoral strategy and psychology of resistance that they learned in their confrontation with communism, they would soon be marginalized and lose the opportunity to become the "yeast and salt" of society.

Czech society and the Czech Church were already preparing to "return to Europe" from the captivity of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Communist totalitarianism a quarter of a century ago, with the "premature perestroika" of the Prague spring. "Democratic socialism," the unborn child of the Prague spring, was brutally aborted by the Soviet occupation. It is pointless to speculate about whether it might have lived, and if so, to what extent it could have carried the genetic mismatch between Marxism and freedom. In the words of Václav Havel, Czech society fell out of history for twenty years. During those years tremendous political, but mainly spiritual, changes were taking place.

It seems that 1968, the year of the Prague spring and of the French students' revolt, was the swan song of Marxism, its last and vain attempt to survive in some form other than that of soulless and cynical regimes. Marxism was obviously the ultimate version of modernism, with its ambition to control both nature and history by means of reason, science, and technology.

As it was, shortly afterward the "modern era"—as had been predicted by authors as different as Nietzsche, Toynbee, Heidegger, and Guardini—truly came to an end. Czech thinker Radim Palous considers 1969, the year that witnessed man's landing on the moon and of the birth of the microprocessor, to have been the symbolic end of modernism. Others think it was the shock of the oil crisis in the 1970s, which killed the general trust in the inexhaustibility of natural resources and technological progress. The "postmodern" period began. Some see the present period as "super-modern"—with its "deconstruction" of the efforts to achieve a uniform perception of the world—while others see it rather as "transmodern," transcending the anthropocentric and rationalistic Age of Reason with a new openness to spiritual values.

Indeed, the new era brings a new religious awareness, but this religiosity does not mark an automatic return to tradition and Church. After many defeats on the chessboard of modern civilization, the Catholic Church of the 1960s learned to bring this dragged-out competition to a draw with the post-Council dialogue. But very soon afterward it lost its old playing partner and found itself instead, like Paul at the Aeropagus, face to face with the Pantheon of new Gods and a market of philosophies. Will it turn its back on this environment or will it find it, as Paul did the altar to the unknown God, a new starting point for its revelation?

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the churches of Central and Eastern Europe have entered the stage a generation behind. It remains to be seen if their "falling out of history" was a period of sleep, or rather a "moratorium" in the same sense as Erik Erickson once found that the postponement represented by, say, military service was an important phase in a young man's development. "You were called a silent Church," John Paul II said to the Catholics in Prague. "But your silence was not the silence of sleep or of death. In the realm of the spirit the greatest values are born in silence. Now build the temple of the free life of your Church, not by returning to what there was before, before you were robbed of your freedom, but build it in the strength of the maturity you have reached in the years of persecution."

I have tried to express my conviction that the most precious fruit of the period of persecution was the courage of the Church in extending solidarity to all those who opted for non-conformism, for a "life in truth." In this "solidarity of the weakened" (Jan Patocka), there were meetings and dialogue with people of other convictions (namely the "critical humanism" represented by Václav Havel), and the spiritual content of this dialogue is still to be articulated. Havel brilliantly described the experience of the "power of the helpless" from the viewpoint of humanism. But the power of the helpless was also the Christian faith, the power of the Gospel to create a living community of people who thought and lived "differently" in the midst of a demoralized society.

The new era and the new social and cultural mentality of the postmodern period again bring new incentives and new challenges. Christians should not lose their spiritual creativity based on the courage not to conform and their readiness for dialogue. Even in the Aeropagus of today the Church must patiently look for the "altar to the unknown God," and, by remaining close to contemporary human beings and their questioning, proclaim the closeness of the Lord.

Tomás Halík *is a Catholic priest and writer living in the Czech Republic. He was secretly ordained a priest in 1978 and was active in the "Underground Church." More recently, he has served as General Secretary of the Czech Bishops Conference. He is now President of the Czech Christian Academy and teaches philosophy and sociology of religion at Charles University in Prague.*

Where Is the West?

Peter L. Berger

During the Cold War period the terms "West" and "East" had fairly clear connotations. These were geographical—this side and the other side of the Iron Curtain—but the geography itself was defined politically, Washington and its allies arrayed against Moscow and its allies, with a vaguely delineated "Third World" supposedly allied with neither. There were some curious aspects of this, as when, for instance, Prime Minister Nakasone solemnly announced that Japan was part of the West. But even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this made sense politically, even if his Samurai ancestors were angrily tossing in their graves.

All this has changed in the last few years. Suddenly the West has once more acquired a much older connotation, cultural rather than political. The term once more refers to that civilization that has its roots in the ancient Mediterranean world—the Occident, the world that was first shaped in Europe, that world that used to be called Christendom. The debate that has raged over Samuel Huntington's by-now classic article on the coming clash of civilizations shows the difficulties encountered by analysts of this historical moment as they try to come to terms with its new realities.

The clash over the meaning of human rights that has troubled relations between the United States and a number of Asian countries (by no means limited to China and the remaining Communist states) has sharply brought to the fore the practical significance of the new terminology. This is no mere theoretical dispute. The so-called "Singapore School" has accused the United States and other industrial democracies of practicing cultural imperialism in trying to foist "Western" values on societies with different traditions. It is further proposed that Asian cultures, because they possess a superior understanding of how individuals should relate to the community, have by the same token a superior understanding of human rights. Thus Asian countries, relying on indigenous values, can find their own distinctive road to modernity.

The alleged difference between "Western" and "Eastern" values is centered in the understanding of the individual's place in society. The "West" is interpreted as exaggerating the autonomy of the individual, as having institutionalized an abstract, mechanical concept of society, and as being gripped by a spiritually impoverished materialism. Against this the "East" is characterized as having a more correct view of the individual embedded in community (and thus as having his rights limited by the rights of his community), as valuing tradition and hierarchy, as holding an organic and thus more natural concept of society, and as retaining a spirituality that limits the crasser forms of materialistic acquisitiveness. What in this view of things is shaping up is indeed, then, a clash of civilizations.

It is not difficult to shoot holes in this ideological balloon, and not only by pointing out its convenience for dictatorial governments who want to oppress their subjects without outside interference. There is the important fact that millions of Asians have noisily demonstrated their belief in the "Western" values supposedly so alien to their being. There is the rather heavy demand for credulity in the presentation of, say, Singapore or Hongkong as locales of tradition and spirituality.

This is not the place for an argument on these points, however. I want here to focus instead on the implied localization of the "West" in this debate as well as on its overall characterization. Just where is this "West"? And is it really as it has been described here? A few years ago Edward Said made renewed use of the term "Orientalism" to refer to simplistic, stereotypical understanding of non-Western cultures by Western scholars. What we have here, I think, is an "Occidentalism," a simplistic understanding of Western culture ironically shared by detractors and advocates alike.

It is instructive to recall that very much the same dichotomy has repeatedly been evoked between societies that the "Occidentalists" would all throw into the same (overly individualistic, abstract, soulless) pot. This is how the Slavophiles saw the "West," which presumably included all the countries beyond the western borders of Russia (with the possible exception of such soul-filled Slavic brethren as the Serbs and Bulgarians). A very similar dichotomy appears in a long line of German ideologists, going back at least to the beginnings of Romanticism, who sought to define the German spirit as an antithesis to the nefarious "West." Its location in this instance was on the other side of the Rhine, though different Germanophiles identified either France or England as the principal antagonist. (Many of them agreed with their Russian soul-cousins that ultimately the Jews were to blame.) Even the western-most countries of Europe were not immune to this particular form of name-calling. English conservatives blamed the "geometric spirit" of the French for many of the ills of modernity (abstract, soulless . . . the formula is the same), utterly different, supposedly, from the wholesomeness of English communitarianism. Edmund Burke's image of peacefully grazing English cattle may serve as an illustration here. Some French conservatives returned the compliment. "Integral Catholicism" (communitarian, grounded in tradition and hierarchy, etc., etc.) stood opposed to the abstract, overly individualistic Protestantism—of which, lo and behold, the English were the most notorious exponents. Now, it seems, it was the English Channel that divided the spirits.

The Americas have been beset by the same dichotomous thinking. Latin American "integralism" has its Iberian roots, as explicated most recently in Claudio Veliz's brilliant book *The New World of the Gothic Fox: Culture and Economy in English and Spanish America*. In its European setting it postulated Spanish wholesomeness against all the heresies flourishing north of the Pyrenees, and it continued to do so into the twentieth century. (Miguel de Unamuno was perhaps the most outstanding advocate of this Iberophile ideology.) In Latin America a similar ideology took the name *Arielismo*, from an influential essay by the Uruguayan writer José Enrique Rodó, who posited the Latin Ariel (Shakespeare's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"airy spirit") against the gross Caliban of the North. Here, the Rio Grande was the great divide.

Yet within this continent of bad *gringos* the very same dichotomy was promulgated by the defenders of the American South, as Eugene Genovese discusses with great lucidity in his new book *The Southern Tradition*. Now it is the Mason-Dixon Line that becomes the metaphysical border. However, before we finally decide that the true location of Western civilization is in Akron, Ohio, we should reflect that contemporary American culture is full of debates that reiterate the same old themes—"liberals" versus "communitarians," "progressive" feminists versus the partisans of corporate sisterhood, and generally the classical American Creed against a variety of racial, ethnic, sexual, and aesthetic tribalisms.

All of this does not mean that geography has nothing to do with these value clashes. It was indeed in one particular region of the world that there occurred what one may simply describe as the discovery of the autonomous individual. It was in that rather small territory that includes both Jerusalem and Athens, where the prophet Nathan told David that, king or not, he was a man ("You are the man!") responsible before God for his actions, and where the Hellenic dream of the individual liberated by reason was born.

It is a serious mistake to understand this discovery as just "an idea." It was that, of course, but more importantly it was a new experience, a new mode of being human. It became institutionalized in different forms, of which the Christian church was the most significant. It would also be a mistake to understand this Ur-Western individualism as unique. There are analogues in other civilizations, in the self-cultivation of the Confucian sage, the putting aside of all worldly connections in the solitary quest for enlightenment of the Hindu or Buddhist ascetic, and, in a much more "democratic" version, in the fundamental Islamic insight that on the last day every individual will stand alone before the throne of judgment. All the same, it was in Europe, and subsequently in the overseas extensions of Europe, that there developed the ideas, the experiences, and the institutions on which the modern canon of human rights is based.

But the societies derived from Europe, the societies of this somewhat mythic "West," cannot rest on their laurels as the *beati possedentes* of the true understanding of human rights. This understanding was never established beyond challenge. From its inception it had to struggle for survival against antagonists both outside and within Western civilization. The Battle of Marathon is fought over and over again, sometimes within the mind of a single individual, and the Persians do not always lose. On the other hand, like all genuine truths, the truth of the autonomous individual cannot be contained within one civilization only. By definition, truth is universal. Today, the struggle is not primarily one between civilizations. The battle lines crisscross all over both the geographical and the cultural maps. This insight may be disturbing; it is also comforting.

Peter L. Berger *is Director of the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture at Boston University.*

Wisteria

Oozing perfume,
the vine kills exquisitely—
in such high style,
the trees have no idea
what's happening to them.

Ashley Mace Havird

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Problem With Communitarianism

J. Budziszewski

What is one to make of communitarianism? For a Christian, answering this question presents no small difficulty. Certainly Christians have no difficulty with community as such. At the core of our faith is the salvation story, and it turns out that without the notion of a people or nation—without the concept of a group of human beings that share a way of life and agree about ultimate loyalties—the story cannot even be told. The problem lies in which community one is speaking about.

The briefest summary of the salvation story as it has been passed down to us will make this clear. In the earliest times we human beings, made by God in his image for intimacy with himself and with one another, ruined ourselves beyond all human means of cure by seeking autonomy instead. Even so, He took initiative to redeem us. From all the nations, He drew one nation apart to be his own: "Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there no other" (Deuteronomy 4:34-35, NIV). From this nation God promised to raise a suffering servant and messianic king, who would not only fulfill God's promises to it but also offer redemption to the other nations. Through the prophet Isaiah, God says to this savior: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles [literally, other nations], that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). This savior was Jesus, who bore the sins of the people according to prophecy. After his resurrection, first telling his followers that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him, he commanded them to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-19). Thus, through the action of the Holy Spirit, the people of promise has entered a radically new phase that will end only with Messiah's return. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:28-29). Although the members of the redeemed community are to respect earthly governors and human institutions, their former commonwealths can no longer command their final allegiance: "Many are enemies of the cross of Christ. . . . Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:18, 19b, 20a).

You see the problem. The temporal community—my school, my club, my town, my nation, or what have you—does surround me with neighbors, each of whom is a matter of transcendent consequence. Moreover this community does occasion genuine duties, for God has commanded my submission to legitimate authority. Because of this—because the temporal City is an unwitting backdrop for a great drama—what goes on within it does matter to the Christian. But the temporal City is not the eternal City. The pageantry and shadow play of its patriotic songs and rituals all trade on a longing for that which no earthly commonwealth can satisfy; they make love to the citizen with words and tokens that are really native to another clime. So in the final analysis, every community but one, the community of faith, is merely external. And although this Commonwealth transcends all old communal lines, it does so only for those who enter within its gates. All of these facts put the Christian sharply at odds with any program to make the temporal community the

J. BUDZISZEWSKI, *whose essay "Politics of Virtues, Government of Knaves" appeared in our June/July 1994 issue, teaches in the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

starting point for ethical or political theory—if that is what communitarianism is. That which is secular is not thereby neutral.

Another way to explore the difficulty with "communitarianism" is to point out that there are at least three communitarianisms, each of which poses problems of its own. The demonic variety makes the community itself the source of value; the accountable variety submits the community to values of which it is not the source, but which can be identified by all; and the narrative variety submits it to values of which it is not the source, but which cannot be identified by all. Let us briefly consider each in turn.

First, demonic communitarianism, the discredited ideology of the *Volk* or People, epitomized by Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels. It was an idolatry, which like all idolatries eventually demanded sacrifices of blood. By treating the community itself as the source of value and the criterion of truth, the Nazis opened vaults of wickedness so vast that they have hardly yet been fathomed. Yet the problem was not chiefly that the Nazis were monsters. It was that their theory of value makes monsters of all who live it to its logical conclusion, be they angry German socialists or merely clever American relativists. Christians have a special responsibility to guard against the demonic sort of communitarianism, not only because the Church was so slow to condemn it the last time it reared its head, but also because on that occasion it drew strength from a specifically Christian heresy: the heresy of Jewish blood-guilt.

Second, accountable communitarianism, represented by Amitai Etzioni and the authors of the *Responsive Communitarian Platform*. While stressing the importance of communal integrity, they firmly deny that community as such is the criterion of truth, or that values become good "merely because such values originate in a community." Therefore they declare that "communal values must be judged by external and overriding criteria, based on shared human experience."

The problem is that when put to the test, these accountable communitarians decline to render such judgment. For after urging that schools provide moral education, they answer the question "Whose morals are you going to teach?" with the simple statement that "We ought to teach those values Americans share"—

> for example, that the dignity of all persons ought to be respected, that tolerance is a virtue and discrimination is abhorrent, that peaceful resolution of conflicts is superior to violence, that generally truth-telling is superior to lying, that democratic government is morally superior to totalitarianism and authoritarianism, that one ought to give a day's work for a day's pay, that saving for one's own and one's country's future is better than squandering one's income and relying on others to attend to one's future needs.

The presupposition behind the counsel to teach the values that Americans share is presumably that American values do pass the test of external and overriding criteria based on shared human experience. But this is not obviously true. Most of the values on the list reflect not so much external and overriding criteria based on shared human experience as a watery compromise among our warring political subcultures. Giving meaning to these glittering generalities requires making specific commitments that the *Platform* avoids. One wonders: do the authors of the *Platform* themselves agree about whether the "dignity of all persons" is offended by abortion, whether racial quotas honor or violate the principle that "discrimination is abhorrent," or whether the virtue of "tolerance" requires putting up with obscenity in the music of rock and rap? Consider, too, the values left off the list. Not even the American people themselves seem completely at ease about whether their admitted obsessions with sexual pleasure and material possession meet the test of external and overriding criteria. But this unease does not make them any less obsessions; they remain "values Americans share."

Now so far, the worst one could say about accountable communitarianism is that it hasn't taken its premises to their logical conclusion. It needs to declare what are the external and overriding criteria, based on shared human experience, that its qualified defense of communities requires; it needs something like natural law. But here we find ourselves in an extraordinary predicament. Natural law is far from unproblematic itself, and communitarianism is often regarded as a maneuver for getting around its mysteries rather than entering into them. Making matters worse is that although natural law is widely (and somewhat misleadingly) considered a Christian doctrine, Christians often find it no less mysterious than others do. Because we are here engaged in defining a Christian response to communitarianism, let us investigate this mystery. Not until we do so will we be in a position to consider communitarianism number three.

The earliest antecedents of natural law theory are all pagan, from Antigone's appeal to a law that surpasses the king's decree, to Aristotle's distinction between natural justice and merely conventional justice, to the Stoic doctrine of a law of nature proper.

Scripture, one might think, would say more, for it testifies that God is the creator, and surely his purposes would be reflected in his creation. In fact it says very little about the subject. Scripture declares God's message in plain words. If one has that, what need has one to scan the hieroglyph of nature? The Old Testament has no term for "nature" at all. The New

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Testament does, but uses it in a normative sense only once; this usage is found in a passage (Romans 1:26-27) contrasting natural with unnatural sexual relations (that which is *phusikain* with that which is *para phusin*). As to natural law proper, only once in all of Scripture are we told that anything of the sort exists. Even here it is mentioned only parenthetically, by way of explaining how it is that unconverted Gentiles, who have neither waited at the foot of Sinai nor sat at the feet of Jesus, can be responsible for their sins at all. Paul says:

> Indeed, when Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature (*phusei*) the things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. (Romans 2:14-15)

Just how much of the requirements of the law is written on the human heart? This is open to doubt, for whatever the heart's original condition, both Testaments make clear that its present condition is abnormal. Jeremiah proclaims (17:9) that "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Paul reminds the Ephesians that before the experience of transforming grace, both he and they lived among the disobedient, "gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature (*epithumiais tais sarkos*, 'strong passions of the flesh') and following its desires and thoughts." "Like the rest," he says, "we were by nature (*phusei*) objects of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). He further holds that persistence in sin darkens or perverts even what natural knowledge there is:

> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. . . . Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. . . . [T]hey invent ways of doing evil. . . . [A]lthough they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. (Romans 1:20-21,28,30,32)

Christians have understood these passages in a variety of ways. Thomas Aquinas seemed to think that the mind had not fallen as far as the rest of human nature; more exactly, he held that the damage of sin lay not so much in the faculty of reason itself as in its ability to regulate the passions. Thus he saw no obstacle to the development of a complete doctrine of natural law. Such a doctrine would be common ground even between Christians and unbelievers.

If natural law doctrine did provide such a common ground, the accountable communitarians would truly have the "external and overriding criteria, based on shared human experience" that they desire. Catholics and some others say it does. More than that, within the doctrine of natural law they would have an explicit doctrine of community itself. As Pius XI declared in 1931 in *Quadragesimo Anno* ("On Reconstructing the Social Order"):

> Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help (*subsidium*) to the members of the body social, and never destroy or absorb them.

The principle of subsidiarity is *pro*-community, but *anti*-collectivist. Those who propose a communitarian alternative to the liberal state would do well to give it close consideration. Its basis is the honor due to persons on account of their being made in the image of God. To be sure, there is a hierarchy of human organizations from families right on up to the central government—but this is a hierarchy of scale and power, not of dignity or resemblance to the Almighty. To be sure, there is such a thing as supra-personal solidarity—but the Church, not the state, is called the Body of Christ, and the only union to have sacramental existence besides the Church is the union of husband and wife. To be sure, we are to lose ourselves—but in face-to-face service to persons who are known to God by name, not in thralldom to impersonal abstractions that are known to nobody. Nothing that families can do for each other should be taken away by associations; nor anything that associations can do, by government; nor anything that local governments can do, by that vast power at the center.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. I said that different Christians understood the Scriptures on human nature in different ways. We have spoken of Catholic Christians; what about the others? By contrast with thinkers like Thomas Aquinas, the most radical of the Reformers thought a normative doctrine of natural law deeply problematic. In the first place, they held, the corruption of the passions

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would make it impossible for even a perfect human mind to trace the original intentions of the Creator. In the second place, the lapsed human mind is no longer perfect; sin has twisted the faculty of reason at least as much as it has the passions. That which is written on the human heart may be sufficient to generate consciousness of guilt—Paul meant no more—but it is surely insufficient either to guide or to motivate.

This bleak interpretation left the Reformers but two possibilities for the project of developing a normative doctrine of natural law. One was to develop a new kind, by reasoning not backwards to creation but forwards from the Fall. Of course, both kinds of doctrine draw attention to what we share by being human. But whereas the older theorists of natural law drew attention to the pattern that was broken, the newer ones drew attention to the brokenness of the pattern; whereas the former asked, "What clues to the divine design have survived the corruption of human nature?" the latter asked "What follows from the bare fact that human nature is corrupt?" This project left much to be desired, for the new theorists of natural law never explained why a mind that was too corrupt to answer the former question was not also too corrupt to answer the latter. Nor did they succeed in banishing all assumptions about the proper ordering of human desires. Thomas Hobbes tacitly made a *summum bonum* of the desire to live, while Samuel Pufendorf tacitly made one of the desire for sociality.

The other possibility was to give up natural law and rely on Scripture alone, trusting the grace of God to hold the wayward mind steady in the effort to understand it. There is much to be said for this, and it remains the choice of many evangelicals. But that brings us to the third kind of communitarianism.

Can external and overriding criteria for judgment based on shared human experience be identified by any means—whether of the old or the new understanding of natural law—to the satisfaction of all? Narrative communitarianism says crisply: No.

To be sure, narrative communitarians admit that there may be such a thing as shared human experience. The problem, as they see it, is that the only resource any particular human being has for interpreting his shared experience is the tale his community tells of itself—whether a story of Exodus, of Revolution, of Death and Resurrection, or of Poor Boys Making Good. Whichever it is, this story does several things. First, it tells how life should be lived and identifies the proper object of unconditioned loyalty, be this object God, Success, or the Classless Society. Second, it sets the boundaries of the community, because it shapes those who enter into the story in a way that others who hear it cannot be shaped. Boundaries remain boundaries even when others are invited to cross them and make the story theirs, for not all will accept such an invitation. According to narrative communitarians, the lesson of these boundaries is stark and immutable: That which makes sense of shared experience is not itself a shared experience; that which makes common humanity intelligible is not itself common to all humanity.

On this view, even natural law would be viewed as merely a part of some community's story. This can be said of either of the forms of natural law. How can it be said of the old? Asked for his scriptural authority, Thomas Aquinas would have cited Paul's remark about the law that is written even on the hearts of the gentiles. But Paul was a Pharisee, trained by Rabbi Gamaliel in both oral and written Jewish Law. Thus he may have been thinking of the rabbinic tradition of a Noahide Law, different from the Mosaic Law in being written on the hearts of all of Noah's descendants—the whole human race—rather than being proclaimed to Israel alone. This tradition was itself a *mishnah* on Genesis 6:5-19:19, a story of wickedness, flood, and deliverance.

And how can it be said of the new natural law? Asked for their scriptural authority, Hobbes and Pufendorf would have gone directly to another story, the story of the Fall in Genesis 3, perhaps including the ensuing violence of Cain against Abel in Genesis 4:1-9. From this they would have abstracted the idea of a pre-political state of anarchy and confusion, ended, through social contract, by the civil state. For them the natural law is nothing but the prudential theorems that follow from the conditions in which the contract originates.

In each case, the narrative communitarian would claim, the idea of moral principles that are recognized among all mankind is rooted in a story that is *not* recognized among all mankind. His claim would be that without some such story such moral principles are (1) mere regularities rather than law, and (2) too thin to be of service in the very predicaments where we need them most.

Driven by such reflections, some narrative communitarians wander into a sort of relativism that leaves them defenseless against communitarians of the first, demonic, sort. Alasdair Macintyre is perhaps the most brilliant example of a thinker in this predicament. In better shape, I suggest, are theologian Stanley Hauerwas and his colleague William H. Willimon, who recognize a crucial point: the impossibility of passing judgment on communal stories from a vantage point somewhere outside them does not preclude the possibility that a particular story is, simply, true. In fact they do claim truth for their own story—which, in a very un-modern but very Christian sort of universalism, they invite the participants in the other stories to join. Disconcerting those who still cling to the dregs of the Enlightenment, they blazon in *Resident Aliens* that "any political slogan that does not need God to make itself credible" is suspect. "Apart from the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth," they explain, the Church "really does not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

know" the meaning of abstractions like peace and justice.

My own position is that of a Christian believer in natural law of the classical sort who finds himself much closer to the Hauerwasian stance than Christian natural law theorists of the classical sort usually do. On the tablets of the heart a law is indeed written, the same for all men—as Thomas Aquinas said—not only as to rectitude but as to knowledge. But it is a far cry from knowing something to acknowledging it, and the human race has been in the condition that psychologists call "denial" ever since the Fall.

Denial is no modern discovery; Thomas himself recognizes it. He divides the precepts of the natural law into categories: primary, or general principles, and secondary, or detailed principles. It seems that when reason is perverted, the secondary principles can be blotted out of the heart—as it were, forgotten. Thomas lists five ways in which such perversion can occur. Reason can be perverted by *passion* as when, momentarily blinded by grief and rage, I unjustly strike the bearer of the news that my wife is deep in adultery with another man. Reason can be perverted by *evil habit* as when, little by little, I get into the habit of using pornography or cutting corners on my taxes. At first my conscience bothers me, but eventually I can see nothing wrong with my behavior. Reason can be perverted by *evil disposition of nature* as when, by defect in one of my chromosomes, I suffer a genetic predisposition to alcoholism. I am still capable of restraint, but it is more difficult for me than it might be for someone else. Reason can be perverted by *vicious custom* as when, having grown up among people who do not regard infanticide as wrong, I take it for granted. Finally, reason can be perverted by *evil persuasion* as when, justifying my behavior on the theory that I am merely exploiting the exploiters, I use electronic tricks to make free long-distance telephone calls. Another name for evil persuasion might be "depraved ideology."

Although the primary precepts cannot be simply forgotten as the secondary precepts can be, even the primary precepts can be blotted out from the heart in "particular actions"—that is, misapplied. A pair of illustrations will make this distinction clear. Consider the precept against theft. According to Thomas, this precept is secondary; I can forget it, as Julius Caesar wrote that the ancient Germans had forgotten it. Contrast the precept against the taking of innocent human life. This precept is primary; I cannot forget it without ceasing to be human altogether. But I can rationalize. I can say, "Yes, but the bastard I killed wasn't innocent!" In the same way, I can tell myself that the unborn child whose blood I shed was not human, or that it was not alive. One of the most remarkable phenomena of our century is the rise of entire political movements devoted to the rationalization of particular sins. Paul could have explained this to us; to those who are determined to make themselves stupid, God says, "Your will be done." (Paraphrasing Romans 1:28.)

To be sure, at some level I pay a price for my rationalizations. Denial takes up so much psychological energy that eventually something has to give. For instance, women in literally thousands of recovery groups report symptoms of Post-Abortion Stress Syndrome: the symptoms vary from case to case and take different amounts of time to appear, but commonly include depression, anxiety, inability to bond with wanted children, resentment of other women's children, and many other indications of distress. Yet whether we pay a price for our rationalizations or not, the fact remains that we can rationalize. Instruction in ethics is no remedy; the more we know, the better we are at it. The lesson I draw from this is that to *profess* moral truths, even when they are not only universally valid but even, in some sense, universally known, cannot be a theologically neutral act. It will inevitably be tied—to a story.

Now the polity is not a community in the simple sense, but a community of communities; not a hearth, but a vestibule. That means that many stories contend. Two things follow. First, any "communitarianism" feasible for the polity as a whole could be reached only by strategic mutual accommodation; second, it could be reached only among those communities whose stories were sufficiently related for them to find some common ground. For instance Catholics, Orthodox, evangelical Protestants, and religious Jews might be able to reach such an accommodation. One could say in this case that they had agreed about the precepts of the natural law.

The problem is that secular humanists have their own "communitarianism"—a counter-accommodation, involving different groups, with different stories, sharing a different common ground—and these two communitarianisms are utterly at odds. In order to know which ground one can occupy, one must decide whose story is true. There is no other way. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Time for Utopia? An Exchange

Patrick Glynn / Glenn Tinder

Patrick Glynn: Utopia and the City of God Reconsidered

One of the cornerstones of modern conservative thinking—indeed, of conservative thinking generally—is the critique of utopianism. As we all know, the critique of utopianism states, very simply, that radical efforts to improve society almost always yield evils worse than those that reformers (or revolutionaries) originally set out to cure. From this follow a number of other conservative precepts, including the famous "law of unintended consequences"—i.e., that social policies inevitably produce by-products that their architects neither intend nor desire—stressing the pitfalls of even moderate social reform.

Many classic conservative texts make anti-utopianism their central theme. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, for example, is nothing other than a critique of utopianism-in-action. Of course, the oldest and most canonical such anti-utopian book is also the foundation work of Western political philosophy, Plato's *Republic*. In the *Republic* Socrates paints an imaginary picture of what he stipulates to be the perfectly just city, only to inform his eager young interlocutors that the establishment of such a city would require, in practice, the communism of the women and children (i.e., incest) and the exile of everyone above the age of ten. In short, Socrates merrily elaborates all the many features of this perfectly wonderful place, only to suggest its achievement would require the greatest injustices that a Greek of his day could imagine. In this sense—if we adopt the now widely accepted interpretation of Plato's work by the late Leo Strauss—the *Republic* might be considered the world's oldest and longest (and possibly least humorous) surviving political joke.

Jonathan Swift, another great conservative, produced his own, somewhat funnier, classic of anti-utopian literature in *Gulliver's Travels*, closely inspired by Plato. In our own century, there have come, in addition, the two famous "dystopian" works of George Orwell, *Animal Farm* and *1984*—chronicling the horror and illogic of totalitarian utopianism, whose defeat and eradication proved to be the great political challenge of our time.

Christians have their own version of the anti-utopian doctrine, known as original sin (the one Christian teaching, as G. K. Chesterton pointed out, for which there has always been abundant empirical evidence). Though the earliest Christians embraced what amounted to utopian practices (e.g., pacifism, communality of property) and entertained something similar to utopian hopes (i.e., the expectation of imminent *parousia*, or Christ's Second Coming), the institutionalized Church after the Edict of Milan quickly made peace with the earthly imperfections of temporal politics.

The classic Christian statement of the necessary tension between Christian moral ideals on the one hand, and the hard exigencies of political life on the other, came early in Church history, with Augustine's *City of God*. In this great fifth-century tract, written partly to answer pagan charges about Christianity's alleged role in the decline of Rome, Augustine famously distinguished between the "earthly city" of politics, which is based on "self-interest" approaching "contempt for God," and a parallel "heavenly city," based on "love of God" up to and including "contempt of self." In other words, politics ran by one set of rules, while Christians were expected to live by quite another. The two might interpenetrate, as when the empire was ruled by a virtuous Christian

PATRICK GLYNN, *a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of* Closing Pandora's Box: Arms Races, Arms Control, and the History of the Cold War *(New Republic Books/Basic Books).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

emperor, but, as Augustine seemed to acknowledge, there were no guarantees. "Nothing in Augustine's works," Father Ernest Fortin has written, "indicates that he anticipated the permanent triumph of the city of God on earth through the definitive reconciliation of the spiritual and temporal powers."

From an early stage, therefore, the Church seems to have accepted as inevitable a certain discrepancy or gulf between true Christian ethics, as defined by Jesus' almost invariably radical pronouncements, and the necessary imperfections of ordinary political life. Indeed, much of Christian moral theology, especially as it applies to politics, has been occupied with finding an acceptable middle ground between the often seemingly impossible ideals of the heavenly city and the ordinary demands of the earthly one. "Just War" theory is one conspicuous example of the attempt to bridge what might seem an unbridgeable gulf. There is little in the Gospels, to put it mildly, that suggests Jesus approved of or condoned the violence of warfare. Be that as it may, war has been an enduring feature of human life, and churchmen and theologians have had to find some way to deal with it. Hence, the elaboration of certain criteria for a "just" war.

The doctrine of original sin also seemingly left room for a Christian conservatism. At first blush, Jesus' teachings about love of neighbor and limitless forgiveness toward enemies do not seem to square particularly well with harsh policies toward welfare recipients or bellicose posturing vis-à-vis foreign adversaries. Yet room opens up for a conservative position once it is acknowledged, first, that the ideal set forth by Jesus seems radical almost to the point of impracticality—Reinhold Niebuhr called it an "impossible possibility"—and second, that the Gospel generally has nothing to say as to instrumentality—i.e., whether this or that approach to welfare or, say, military deterrence is more or less effective. In short, the basis for Christian conservatism, as with its secular counterpart, lies in the recognition that we live in an imperfect world. As Niebuhr wrote:

> The ethical demands made by Jesus are incapable of fulfillment in the present existence of man. They proceed from a transcendent divine unity of essential reality and their final fulfillment is possible only when God transmutes the present chaos of this world into its final unity.

But is this destined always to be true? Are we to assume that history remains essentially static in relation to good and evil until Christ finally returns in glory to judge the living and the dead? Or is it reasonable to imagine the possibility of social and historical progress—of an evolution of human institutions as well as ethical awareness that permits over time a "kinder, gentler" (i.e., more Christlike) approach even to political problems? Could it be that our responsibilities as human beings evolve over time, and, in particular, that in our own day, when so much of the physical and political harshness that Augustine simply took for granted has gone out of life, the long-standing orthodox guidelines are no longer quite sufficient for a Christian life, that Jesus' more radical messages take on a fresh relevance?

Anti-utopianism, whether in its secular (classical) or Christian form, is a teaching about the limits of politics. But of course many political limits that the ancients believed to be immutable have already been breached or overcome. For example, Socrates and his students believed that democracy was an inherently unstable form of government. Aristotle thought that republics above a certain very modest size were essentially unmanageable. And all these men took for granted that freedom (for the few) was inconceivable without the institution of slavery to liberate citizens from the rigors of subsistence labor.

All this, thank heaven, is well behind us today. We now have very large, very stable, very prosperous modern democracies (without, heaven forbid, slavery). The limits to politics that Socrates and company saw as absolutes have been transcended through a host of major technological, economic, and political innovations, just as these philosophers' sorely limited and inaccurate view of the physical universe has been massively expanded and corrected by scientific investigation.

Does this count as progress? Most people would certainly agree that it does. (Of course you will find a tiny minority that continues to insist that our society is greatly inferior to that of the "heroic" Greeks of classical times. But this kind of historical romanticism—hardly new in the life of intellectuals—is difficult to take seriously.)

So it makes little sense today to consider Plato's *Republic*, or for that matter Augustine's *City of God*, as the last word in politics. Too much has changed. Nonetheless, if the anti-utopian perspective has enjoyed a special attraction in our era, it is partly because of our unlovely experience with actual utopianism. The rise of communism and fascism—the great, abortive utopian undertakings of our century—did much both to cast doubt on the validity of a belief in human progress and to confirm the worst predictions of conservative anti-utopian critics. It was against the harsh background of these developments—including World War II and the Cold War—that, for example, Reinhold Niebuhr developed his unsentimental theology of "Christian realism," which denied the faith in progress and which strongly argued for qualifying Christian principles of love and kindness when coping with the hard exigencies of the political realm.

The question is: Now that we have seen the end of the Cold War, doesn't it make sense to reevaluate this perspective? I am particularly struck by the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

manner in which the Cold War ended—the remarkable nonviolence of the change. This is not something that I, or others like me (all of us dutiful adherents of the secular anti-utopian school), were prepared for. Before 1989 and 1990 most of us would have argued, on good anti-utopian principles, that communism might end all right, but only in a bloodbath. Instead, what we witnessed in 1989-1990, as I remember my late friend Paul Seabury emphasizing to me not long before he died, was the first "peaceful revolution" in the history of the globe—the first sudden relinquishing of power by a ruling class in the absence of violence. Seabury, a past Executive Committee Chairman of Americans for Democratic Action and a Christian realist if ever there was one, was also struck by the change—though I have no idea whether his firm Niebuhrian convictions were thereby shaken. I somehow doubt it.

It is especially interesting to note the large role played by religion and spirituality in this process of peaceful transformation of the Communist world, chronicled in such recent books as Niels Nielsen's *Revolutions in Eastern Europe* or George Weigel's *The Final Revolution*. Were it not for Poland's Catholic-inspired Solidarity, were it not for the Lutheran "Revolution of Light" in East Germany, it seems unlikely that communism would have unraveled or that the Berlin Wall would have peacefully collapsed.

Two things about those final moments still seem peculiar. First, there was remarkable—might we say "miraculous"?—interpenetration of the secular and the sacred, of politics and spirituality, at this critical historical turning point. Second, and equally surprising, the good guys won.

This was not the first time in history, of course, that "mere" spiritual conviction and community, expressed as nonviolent protest, had won out over superior military force: think of Gandhi's experience in India. But of course the major contention of most of us anti-utopians in the 1980s was that it was perfectly useless to try Gandhi's methods with the likes of the Communists. That was what we kept telling the nuclear pacifists and hands-across-the-globe types while Ronald Reagan rebuilt the American arsenal. I am not now saying that the nuclear pacifists were entirely right or that Reagan and people like me who worked for him on arms control were entirely wrong. Indeed, I am sure we were right about a lot of things, including the need to keep pressure on the Soviets and stand up for what we believed.

What I am suggesting, however, is that the world itself may have changed and may still be changing in ways of which conservatives do not normally dream—and, in particular, that a truly spiritual and truly ethical politics may now be more than a pipedream, may now be within reach. That is one possible meaning of the collapse of communism. I say all of this, I hope, with an appropriate measure of sobriety and caution.

For, on the other hand, there has always been a danger in the Christian realist perspective, of which Niebuhr himself was keenly aware. It is that, in acknowledging the imperfections of the "earthly city," we become somewhat too ready, not to say eager, to accept them, to set the high jump bar of spiritual challenge in politics and society, as it were, too low. "There have always been orthodox Christians," Niebuhr noted in his well-known essay "Augustine's Political Realism," "who have tended to accept the necessities of politics as practically normative and to elaborate a political ethic not very different from that of the cynics." Indeed, there are times when one cannot help but feel that certain Christian conservatives—in their harsh, by-your-bootstraps attitudes to the poor, their bitter condemnation of their political and moral opponents, their readiness to consider military action as one "option" among many, even when tens of thousands of innocent lives may be at risk (as in Korea)—have strayed so far from New Testament values as to be practicing something almost unrecognizable as New Testament living. I say this as someone who has held similar views in the past—albeit during a time when I considered myself to be more or less an atheist.

Christianity, if it is to mean anything, must mean something in politics as well as in other realms of human life. Christians *ought* to be a bit kinder and gentler about people, whether dealt with on an individual or collective basis, as Augustine and even Niebuhr understood. But one can go further, and ask whether conditions are not now fundamentally new, are not now essentially different from those prevailing when Niebuhr, to say nothing of Augustine or Plato, wrote. One may ask whether, in a sense, by helping to relieve us of the burden of the Cold War, the Divine Master has not, as it were, raised the moral high jump bar a bit higher. Now that we no longer face the rigors of a world riven by global conflict, now that the Cold War is over, now that nations are (with some notable exceptions) generally softening and moving toward more cooperative ways of doing business, should we not be expecting more of ourselves and our social policies than the cold calculations focused on elemental survival that so often dominated our thinking during the Cold War era? Should we not be learning to be a little softer with our fellow creatures, both at home and abroad?

The question of progress itself needs to be examined afresh in light of recent events, even from a purely secular point of view. Conservatism is usually based on a disbelief in, or at least a strong suspicion of, the idea of progress. Such disbelief seemed entirely justified for much of this terrible century. But now that Soviet Communism has so peacefully subsided, might we not permit ourselves a bit more optimism? Those who argued at the beginning of this century,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and at the end of the last, that mankind was on the verge of a new order where commerce would supersede war, where democracy would inevitably spread, and where abundance would multiply may not have been so wrong after all. It appears that mankind is indeed arriving at this point, albeit after a series of characteristically tragic historical divagations and detours, and perhaps with a few more painful detours to come. Yet I for one have become persuaded that we are indeed living through what Francis Fukuyama (borrowing from Hegel) has called "the end of history"—though this end must be considered not so much a moment as a process.

Of course the "end of history" has a special meaning for Christians, as does "history" itself. The distinguishing feature of both Judaism and Christianity, as is well known, is that they are historical religions, religions with a time line. What is this time line but the story of God's progressive revelation to, and perhaps in, mankind? From the spiritual perspective, the history of mankind can be considered a work in progress, whereby the values of the "heavenly city" are gradually interpenetrating and shaping the "earthly city," until that moment when spirit has conquered, or perhaps married, matter, and human life is the perfect expression of incarnation, of God in earthly form. We strive in the earthly city to build the heavenly city, and each century, despite many failures, even despite ourselves, we seem to get a bit closer. The process consists of a refinement and softening of human life and human values. Christ is our great forerunner in this process, the model of conduct and consciousness toward which we are striving, individually and collectively. At the center of this model is the replacement of ego with agape.

We are of course a long way from realizing the kingdom of heaven on earth. But who would deny that our institutions and political assumptions are kinder and more humane today than they were a century ago, let alone three centuries ago? Even ten years ago, to cite just one example, it was possible to stigmatize and exclude the handicapped in a way that is no longer tolerated in advanced societies today. Less than half a century ago in America, racial segregation was taken for granted. Now, mirabile dictu, apartheid has disappeared even from South Africa. Gradually, the egotistical values of the earthly city are yielding to the agape-based values of the heavenly city. The process, though gradual, appears to be accelerating.

If this post-Communist, postmodern age has a special meaning, it may lie in the rapid closing of the gulf between the earthly city and heavenly city. In nearly every realm of human activity, with or without an explicit reference to religion, there is a hint of a new softening, a new kindness, a new emphasis on ethics, values, and spirituality. Today whole businesses—well-known companies like Levi Strauss and Federal Express—are attempting to internalize more altruistic business practices and principles, and enjoying remarkable economic success in the process. Countries, too, are more cooperative, yielding sovereignty for the common good (and individual economic advancement) under such arrangements as the European Union and the North Atlantic Free Trade Area. Increasingly, also, there is a recognition that solution of the hard problems that remain—whether one speaks of welfare, crime, or international criminality—will probably not succeed without some reference to values, spirituality, and even God.

Nations today are facing new challenges, but in contrast to the main challenges of the modern war era, what are being challenged are human capacities for patience and kindness. Wealthy Western Europe has been forced to become its Eastern brother's keeper, and long-time homogeneous societies such as Germany and Britain are being called upon to assimilate unprecedented numbers of immigrants. America, having focused so long on its burdensome but still rewarding job as world constable, is relentlessly reminded of the gaping wounds in its urban neighborhoods. The meaning of crime in America today is that no citizen, even out of self-interest, can perfectly insulate himself or herself from the task of social uplift that is our collective responsibility. And, finally, as the smoke of the Cold War battlefield clears, the industrial world as a whole will be forced to revisit again the massive problems of development and environment entailed in lifting up humanity at large to decent living standards. As the decades pass, the pressures to find viable alternatives, spiritual and economic, to our present excessive materialism in the West will doubtless increase.

The key to the new era may be an increasingly explicit and comforting recognition of the link between social problems and individual spiritual growth. For a secular-minded person, poverty and crime are nothing more than blemishes on material life. For a Christian, they present an opportunity to do good and to grow back toward God in the process. Of course we will continue to disagree, healthily, politically, about the means of accomplishing our ends. But it seems to me that such old-fashioned, modernist, Cold War distinctions as liberal and conservative must have less meaning in a post-Cold War, postmodern world—particularly among Christians, who must strive, above all else, to be one with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Glenn Tinder: Christians and the Lure of Utopia

For many people, utopias are endlessly fascinating. They set before us exciting pictures of human powers and possibilities. Christianity of course casts doubt on such pictures by presenting its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

own "utopia," the kingdom of God, as something other than an historical and human possibility: a community to be realized only with the end of history and only on the initiative of God. Yet even for Christians utopianism can be alluring—not so much in the form of a stark statement of an ideal we supposedly can achieve here and now but rather as a vision of perfections to be attained gradually, in the course of history. The former we might call radical utopianism. It consists in the belief that humans can construct a good society in as deliberate and expeditious a fashion as they can a bridge or a building—the belief exemplified classically by Plato's *Republic*. The other form of utopianism, which relies less on conscious human mastery than on the supposed beneficence of spontaneous historical tendencies, might be called evolutionary utopianism. Its most familiar expression is the modern doctrine of progress.

Radical utopianism is too manifestly in conflict with Christian eschatology to arouse much interest among orthodox Christians. Evolutionary utopianism, however, is more subtle. Its appeal to Christians is indicated by the fact that it has appeared in at least two Christian forms during the last two centuries: in Hegel's philosophy of history and in liberation theology—to say nothing of the fact that countless Christians have enthusiastically embraced the common doctrine of progress. Such appeal, moreover, is readily understandable. In the Christian vision, history is governed by God and therefore has meaning; meaning, presumably, is manifest in progress of some kind; finally, progress that is significant by Christian standards must be moral and spiritual. These three steps lead, with an appearance of inevitability, to the idea that Christianity implies moral and spiritual progress—and if progress, why not its culmination in moral and spiritual attainments, and corresponding social perfections, far beyond anything we know today?

Moreover, evolutionary Christian utopianism finds support not only in a certain chain of theological principles but also in plain facts of history. During the past two-and-a-half millennia several kinds of progress have occurred, and most of these, without stretching terms outrageously, can be called moral and spiritual. Modern science is as clear an instance as any. True, science does not tell us about the realities that matter most to us; yet few would deny that it represents a kind of triumph of the human spirit. And its offspring, technology, is not entirely unspiritual either, in spite of its myriad questionable uses; it is a capacity for exercising the dominion God vested in man in the original act of creation. Even the material progress that has resulted from technology, as exemplified in the comfort, convenience, and safety enjoyed by large majorities today in the West, is in some ways true progress in spite of flagrant abuses. It makes possible, without the slavery that so defaced the culture of antiquity, the leisure necessary to civilization; indeed, there is today no material reason why high culture and popular culture cannot be the same.

In addition, there have been forms of political progress of such moment as to give them a spiritual resonance: the development, on the basis of medieval institutions, of modern representative government, permitting democracy over wide areas and providing safeguards against mob rule; the invention by the American framers of federalism, offering possibilities of political unity on a scale far more vast than could be envisaged hitherto except through a commanding imperial center, like Rome; and the evolution, beginning in the ancient world and extending through the Middle Ages, of the modern judicial system—a system that perhaps comes nearer than any other human device to institutionalizing reason and fairness in the settlement of disputes. Closely connected with political institutions are the customs and traditions in which they are set. Even these bear a look of progress. Thus today, to take an obvious example, there is a concern for equal justice, regardless of race and gender, that did not exist even fifty years ago.

The *secular* doctrine of progress is unacceptable to Christians for a variety of well-known reasons. But why shouldn't Christians develop a *spiritual* doctrine of progress—one amounting to an affirmation of evolutionary utopianism? Indeed, if they fail to do so, how can they sustain the principle—so vital to Christian faith because of its roots in the principle of divine sovereignty—that history has meaning? These are distinct questions, and I shall begin with the former. Are there insuperable objections to a Christian version of evolutionary utopianism?

I would suggest that there are. Indeed, they seem rather clear. If Christians have often overlooked them, that may be owing to the power and plausibility of a spiritualized doctrine of progress. One who hesitates before accepting such a doctrine, however, is apt to find reasons for not accepting it crowding about and plucking at his sleeve. Let us note some of the most persuasive of these reasons.

First, evolutionary utopianism presupposes that some generations are born on a higher moral level than others; otherwise, there could be no progress in morality. But such a presupposition is incomprehensible. Although customs and traditions can improve, they cannot lift those who conform with them to a state of greater moral goodness. Abraham Lincoln made observations about the racial problems of his time that any politically correct college undergraduate today would know better than to make. Is the politically correct undergraduate, then, morally superi-

Glenn Tinder *is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts at Boston and author of* The Political Meaning of Christianity.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or to Lincoln? Someone might argue that while no one can be *born* on a higher moral level than anyone else, the refinement of customs and traditions nevertheless makes it possible for some to attain a higher level than those attained by earlier generations. One can agree in part; no doubt refined customs and traditions help some people avoid particular moral missteps. Can they, however, help them achieve goodness? Can we think that the time will come when we can say of someone like Francis of Assisi that he displayed remarkable goodness given the handicaps inherent in his historical time and place but that now many of us can surpass him? Will our standards of sainthood gradually be relativized? Will past saints diminish in stature as we rise to a height that enables us to look down on them?

Second, a parallel argument can be made concerning spiritual insight. Christian revelation cannot be thought of, by a Christian, as progressive. Anyone who denies the once-and-for-all character of Jesus' life, as set forth and explained in the New Testament, is not a Christian (assuming that we are not free to define Christianity however we please). How, then, can Christians inquire into revelation and deepen their Christian understanding? This is the question Cardinal Newman dealt with in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. If Newman's conclusions can be summarized in a few words, it might be in the broad statement that the implications of revelation can gradually become clearer in our minds. Thus we achieve a better understanding of the meaning of revelation. But Newman never suggested that the time would come when humans in history will see things unknown to the authors of the New Testament. His very aim was to refute the Protestant charge that the Roman Catholic view of tradition jeopardized the integrity and finality of biblical revelation. He did allow that the development of doctrine might correct errors found in the Church Fathers, as in the case of heretical views put forth by Origen. But again, so far as I am aware, there is no suggestion that later ages might surpass the Church Fathers in Christian wisdom. It is difficult to see how a Christian could dispute Newman's argument in substance. Doctrine may be refined and amplified through incremental insights into revelation, but the spiritual substance of any one mind or generation of minds cannot grow in like fashion. In other words, the development of doctrine is not the development of the beatific vision. The latter is not an historical occurrence. The last generation of the Christian era, accordingly, cannot be wiser than the first, just as it cannot be morally better. Otherwise, revelation is relativized, along with sainthood.

Third, the Kingdom of God is a symbol of perfect communion, between humans and God and, on that basis, among humans themselves. But such communion is inconceivable in the context of the conditions that give rise to history. We cannot think of history except by thinking of human relations as imperfect and therefore changing. The very concept of history contains within it the concept of human estrangement in some form and, accordingly, of power relations. Hence the notion that perfect communion might be attained within history, or even by means of a gradual transition beyond history, is unthinkable. The Christian idea of life in the presence of God presupposes the end of history and thus an eschatological hiatus. It is of the essence of utopia, however, to deny any such hiatus. One of the most cogent criticisms to be made of utopias is that by reducing humans to the scale of history, they degrade them. To paint utopias in Christian colors, thereby reducing God likewise to the scale of history, would not, to say the least, render the original error less grievous.

Fourth, Christian revelation presupposes an enduring human situation, one constituted fundamentally by the radical and deliberate alienation of the human race from God. The situation is moral and thus is often referred to in connection with the phrase "original sin." But it is also ontological. This means that humans cannot change it merely by resolving to be better. It can be changed only by God. The very heart of the Christian idea is that this has happened—in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Human beings have been "justified." This does not mean that they now are righteous. It would be nearer the Christian view to say that they—or at least those who accept their justification through faith—are now in a position to strive toward righteousness. With justification we can begin the journey toward sanctification. These matters of course are handled with differing emphases by Protestants and Catholics. However, their explanations are not at odds on many—if any—absolutely essential points; they occupy common doctrinal ground. But how could an evolutionary utopian stand on that ground? Are the conditions of justification and sanctification to be fundamentally altered as history progresses? Will humans become steadily less dependent on the act of justification accomplished on the Cross? Will they gradually achieve a sanctity that has no integral relationship with what happened on Calvary? Again, it appears that evolutionary utopianism necessarily becomes involved in a relativization of past ages so sweeping as to be incompatible with the Christian understanding of the historical origins and historical status of Christian truth.

Finally, it must be noted that the kind of reasoning represented in the preceding paragraphs is confirmed by Scripture. All three synoptic Gospels present a vision of the end of history as catastrophic and overwhelming. "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven." Can we think that such things will happen

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to a race that has reached a state of moral and spiritual perfection? On the contrary, the conclusion that there will still, in the last days of history, be much wickedness and spiritual blindness is irresistible. Whatever man's moral and spiritual accomplishments, history will end inconclusively.

The foregoing objections to evolutionary utopianism are not intended to constitute an exhaustive statement but only to indicate the severity of the difficulties inherent in any Christian version of such utopianism. It remains to say something about the historical record, which is plainly accordant with the argument I have been making. As Reinhold Niebuhr emphasized, history is at once progressive and regressive. It is ambiguous. Thus, even as we enjoy the benefits of such achievements as representative government and judicial rationality, we realize that the wars of the twentieth century have been more destructive than any earlier wars; that the Nazi death camps and the Soviet Gulag probably represent a deeper descent into savagery than seen in any prior historical era; and that twentieth-century totalitarianism is an historically unprecedented exercise in human arrogance and cruelty. And added to all else is the spiritual confusion and emptiness that is evident in perhaps every nation and class in the world. (Can intellectual nihilism reach a more extreme development than it has in some of the literature of "postmodernism"?) In spite of all historical advances, this may have been, as Elizabeth Bishop remarked, "the worst century so far."

These arguments, however, bring us face-to-face with a formidable question: if moral and spiritual evolution is so ambiguous and limited, what meaning can history have? Evolutionary utopianism has not been quite set aside until it is shown that we do not depend on it for our sense that history is not mere sound and fury, without significance. For history must have significance if God is sovereign over his creation. Augustine established this principle fifteen centuries ago in his assault on Manicheism. The question is formidable, however, because any version of historical meaning may, like evolutionary utopianism, threaten to render eternity subordinate to time. Whatever meaning history has, it cannot be such that the absolutes assumed in the Christian concept of revelation are lost among the relativities of history. The dilemma arose when Christians realized that the end of history was not imminent, as the first generation of Christians supposed. What purpose can there be in events not preparing the way for, but *following upon*, the entry into time of timeless truth?

Something very simple must be said at the outset: *We cannot know*. One of the most elementary, but indispensable, truths about history was voiced by Albert Camus when he said that history as a totality is nonexistent for man. That is true not only because the future is almost altogether unknown to us. The past, too, is largely unknown; revelation aside, what we know of the past is a tentative reconstruction based on a few fragments of memory—drops, as it were, from the incomprehensible river of all that has occurred. Immanent in history, we are not in a position to speak of history as an object available for examination. Camus' view is, I think, entirely in accord with Christian doctrine, for at bottom it is simply a recognition of our finitude. We can, to be sure, draw inferences concerning the end of history from revelation. But we cannot, either through revelation or natural knowledge, lay out the patterns or unravel the puzzles of earthly history in its totality. The orthodox Christian view—including that of Augustine, as set forth in *The City of God*—is fundamentally unlike the view expressed in works such as those of Hegel, Marx, and Comte. Such writers prompt the surmise that it is not so much Christians who are apt to treat history as a known object, thus tacitly denying our finitude, as it is forgetful atheists.

Still, it must be possible to show how, granting all of the objections brought against evolutionary utopianism in this essay, history *might* have meaning. I shall offer nothing more than a sketchily stated hypothesis, one suggested in Newman's *Essay*. Newman likened the development of doctrine to the way in which an idea in someone's mind may gradually unfold so that the idea, without being essentially changed, comes to be better understood. There is a growing perception of implications. It seems in the spirit of Newman to suggest that the meaning of history may lie in *elucidation* (a word used by Newman himself to characterize the overall thrust of the *Essay*) of the truth made manifest in Christ. This is accomplished not only through thought and discourse but also through every event that shows an aspect of humanity hitherto unknown, enabling us to relate ourselves anew to Christ and to the mystery of the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. History is a process of articulation and clarification.

To save such an hypothesis from becoming merely another version of evolutionary utopianism, however, it must immediately be linked with two rules of application. The first is at the forefront of Newman's *Essay*. Every new insight must be referred back to God's original act of revelation in Christ, the aim being to assure not merely its harmony with revelation but its implicit presence in revelation. For a Christian, revelation offers infinite depths for exploration. But it cannot be added to or revised. Augustine remarked that we believe in order to understand; we must take care, however, that our understanding does not come into conflict with, or in any way deviate from, our beliefs. This is a matter of keeping watch over the frontiers of Christian wisdom and of guarding the absolute, present in Christ, against the relativities of human thoughts and events.

The second rule needed to assure that the concept

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of history as elucidation does not threaten the essentials of Christian faith is, I think, in accordance with Newman's *Essay* although not explicitly stated therein. It must be remembered that the insights gained in the course of history cannot, while history continues, be gathered together, fully expressed, and comprehended in a single spiritual experience. Doctrine may, as Newman argued, undergo significant development; indeed, it must to remain alive. But, as already noted, the development of doctrine is not the development of the beatific vision. If it were, evolutionary utopianism would be true.

My hypothesis, then, is that the millennia succeeding the life of Christ may be thought of as a course of divine instruction. To advance this hypothesis is not to claim the kind of knowledge claimed by Hegel and Marx; nor is it to suggest that such knowledge will ever be gained in the course of history. There is a sense in which Hegel and Marx did not take history seriously. They assumed—with qualifications in the case of Marx—that humans could rise above history by scientifically comprehending it. Christians, however, see things otherwise. God undertook to instruct the human race, not by lifting them out of history, but by himself entering into history. The hypothesis of history as elucidation, therefore, is nothing more than a mandate to live in history, where God has placed us, and be alert to what we will learn by playing a role in a drama authored by God. The process of elucidation will never provide us with a vantage point above history and will never enable us to take hold of history as an object of knowledge. It will only give us glimpses into the mystery of divine providence.

For Christians this should not be a discouraging conclusion. To take part in history we do not need to comprehend it in its totality but rather to let ourselves be led by God. We do this by lucidly and responsibly inhabiting the historical situations in which God has placed us. The necessities these situations impose on us reflect God's leading. A perfect illustration of such participation is found in Philip Hallie's moving book *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed.* During World War II the people of a village situated in Vichy France, Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, devoted themselves with a unanimity that seems, in the full Christian sense of the word, miraculous, to saving Jewish refugees from the Nazis. It is estimated that a village of about three thousand people saved the lives of about five thousand Jews. The effort was led by a Christian pastor. There was an SS camp nearby, and Nazis were not hesitant to destroy whole communities that defied them. Le Chambon's enterprise thus was highly dangerous. But it was carried on, with the cooperation of numberless citizens, throughout the Nazi occupation of France. When interviewed in later years, and asked to explain their willingness to jeopardize their lives and families, the response of the villagers was almost always that they merely did what obviously had to be done. In other words, they were responding to the necessities inherent in their historical moment, and in doing this they were following God. This brings us to a final criticism of evolutionary utopianism.

One of the most serious threats contained in evolutionary utopianism is the encouragement it gives us to think that historical progress will eventually render us independent of divine guidance. As we approach the end of the ages we can guide ourselves. Such a sentiment subverts a proper understanding of man's relationship with history. If God entered into and took part in history, it is scarcely fitting for human beings to try to transcend history and to grasp and govern it. To acknowledge this is not to give up opportunities to be human but only pretensions to be divine. As participants in history we can guard the traditions and memories left to us by the past—a conservative enterprise—and can seek to improve the earthly state of our fellow human beings—a progressive enterprise. (Reinhold Niebuhr's thought shows that anti-utopianism is not necessarily, in any narrow sense of the term, conservative.) And occasionally we can gain intuitions of the end of history, as in experiences of beauty, truth, and love. Such possibilities as these are amply allowed for in the traditional, Augustinian view of history. We need not—and, for the sake of the integrity of Christian faith, must not—ask for more. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind

Mark Noll's The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind *(Eerdmans) is an important book on an important topic. To note its appearance and assess its argument we asked four knowledgeable observers of the evangelical world for their views on the subject and the book.*

— The Editors

Grant Wacker

Someone has quipped that an evangelical can be defined as someone who says to a liberal, "I'll call you a Christian if you'll call me a scholar." Though Wheaton College historian Mark Noll knows all the one-liners about evangelicals, this one does not make his book. Evangelicals' anti-intellectualism is no laughing matter. "The scandal of the evangelical mind," he laments, "is that there is not much of an evangelical mind." Since the movement's birth in the transatlantic revivals of the early eighteenth century, it has brought millions to deep and lasting Christian faith. Even today, polls tell us, a solid majority of the folk who regularly attend and participate in the life of local churches are evangelical in belief and behavior. But in the process, Noll argues, they have paid a terrible price, for they have "abandoned the universities, the arts, and other realms of 'high' culture."

By "mind" Noll does not mean theology or biblical studies per se, where, all things considered, evangelicals have done quite well. His target, rather, is evangelicals' failure seriously to confront the "whole spectrum of modern learning, including economics and political science, literary criticism and imaginative writing, historical inquiry and philosophical studies, linguistics and the history of science, social theory and the arts."

The problem, in short, is evangelicals' appalling parochialism, their unwillingness to break out of the vast but all-too-comfortable ghetto of evangelical churches and colleges and publishing networks and engage an intellectual world long ago captured by Marx and Darwin and Freud.

Noll's work is a jeremiad, profound in implication but simple in form. The tragedy of evangelicals' poor scholarship, he argues, is that it grew from negligence, and the roots of that negligence go way back. In his view evangelical thought is best understood as a tissue of unexamined assumptions arising from early nineteenth century American values. Those values included revivalism, separation of church and state, political republicanism, social democracy, economic free enterprise, philosophical realism, and patriotic nationalism. Evangelical thinking suffered additional damage from the "disaster of fundamentalism." In its holiness/pentecostal form, fundamentalism encouraged morbid inwardness; in its dispensationalist form, it fostered wooden literalism and an unhealthy preoccupation with predicting the future.

According to Noll, these influences have left modern evangelicals pathetically ill-equipped to confront the world of contemporary learning. They substitute activism for study, populism for the wisdom of the centuries, pragmatism for time-tested orthodoxy. Assuming themselves to be purely objective, disinterested readers of the biblical text, they display little concern for the staggering problems of hermeneutics. Bereft of self-criticism or subtlety, they show only grudging willingness to grapple with complexity and doubt. Evangelicals' world is a Manichean one of absolutes, affording little sense that the line between good and evil runs not between groups but (in Solzhenitsyn's terms) through every individual soul.

Things did not have to turn out this way. Medieval monastics, the Reformers, the Puritans, and Jonathan Edwards himself had determined to bring every aspect of life under the guidance of Christian thinking. Noll even finds the efforts of certain late-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nineteenth-century giants like Charles Hodge and Augustus Strong compelling because of their determined effort to embrace the knowable world within Christian categories. If evangelicals had listened more to them, if they had been willing to draw upon the riches of other traditions like the Dutch Reformed, the Lutheran, and the Orthodox, if they had been humble enough to take a few cues from their counterparts in the British Isles, the story might have developed quite differently. But it did not because evangelicals followed the path of least resistance.

Hard words, to be sure, but they are the words of a "wounded lover," as Noll calls himself, the words of an evangelical insider calling other insiders to humility in the face of a great heritage squandered. Though the book is concisely and elegantly written, it reflects awesome erudition. The footnotes stand out as a treasure in themselves, not stacked up like index cards in a shoebox but judiciously brought forth as needed. Still more importantly, Noll shows, very much as H. Richard Niebuhr did in *The Kingdom of God in America*, how to be passionately committed to a cause without sacrificing fairness (laying one's own assumptions out on the table) or publicness (remembering that all bits of evidence and lines of argument must be open to the scrutiny of insiders and outsiders alike).

Not surprisingly Noll (like all good historians) stirs up more questions than he answers. Some readers will feel that he errs by being too charitable toward the secular academic world. If George Marsden, Bradley Longfield, and other historians are right about the growing hegemony of secular assumptions in the modern research university, it may be difficult for orthodox voices of any kind to be heard since they are excluded from the conversation to begin with. Yet Noll seems not to think so, or at least he seems to think that evangelicals do well first to focus upon their own shortcomings rather than outsiders' prejudices.

A more troubling question is whether *any* religious person can expect to gain a hearing in the surging diversity of the modern academy. The only way for evangelicals and Jews and Muslims and the mass of academics who do not care very much about any faith to get along is to agree on certain rules of exchange, and those rules usually mean not talking about the issues that lie deepest in their hearts. The plain fact is that the pluralism of modern university culture makes the language of strong commitment difficult to sustain on a day to day basis. Teaching about a Maimonides or a Barth is one thing; actually working with them in a faculty meeting may be quite another.

Finally, it is not clear that evangelicals do in fact need to establish a Christian view of everything. To be sure, it is important to know that Christians in general and evangelicals in particular can engage the highest and most demanding forms of intellectual work, but it is doubtful that the adjective "evangelical" makes much difference when we are talking about the work that most scholars, especially those in the natural sciences, undertake most of the time. Even for Noll, an historian of religion, most of what he does (and he does a lot) can be assessed by technical protocols of historical scholarship that are pretty much applicable to everyone in the profession.

However we answer these questions, the largest one remains: Do resources for renewal lie within the evangelical tradition? Yes, Noll believes, but they can be salvaged only with strenuous effort. Noll thus urges evangelicals to historicize themselves, to see how their favored modes of reaction are conditioned by time and place. He calls them to develop a sense of irony, to see, in words historian Peter Brown used in a different context, that the first and final enemy of the Christian intellectual is the "patina of the obvious." It was said of Jonathan Edwards that he "smelt of the lamp"; Noll reminds Edwards' latter day heirs that there is no substitute for long grueling hours in the library, the study, the laboratory. And in an age obsessed with narrative, when everyone seems to think that his own story is as valid as anyone else's, Noll effectively says No, there really is a normative conversation out there, a conversation defined by the reality-shaping institutions of our society, and it is high time for evangelicals to enter into it.

Thus this sermon, like all true jeremiads, ends on a note of hope. Noll urges these reforms upon evangelicals, not because they will afford them more power and prestige, but solely for the glory of God. "The search for a Christian mind is not, in the end," he tells us, "a search for mind but a search for God." Evangelicals purport to speak biblical truth, but in fact sold their soul to American culture long ago. The lips are Esau's but the voice is Jacob's. So for Noll evangelicals must become bilingual. They must continue to address the world with the life-giving words of faith that they know so well. At the same time, they must learn to translate those words into the language of the public academic sphere.

The great and pleasant irony of this book is that as long as the evangelical subculture is able to turn out a mind as learned and as Christian as Mark Noll's, its future promises to be a lot brighter than he supposes.

GRANT WACKER *is Associate Professor of American Religious History at Duke Divinity School.*

Keith Pavlischek

Largely because Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* is a crie de coeur, and indeed "an epistle from a wounded lover," I suspect it is more likely to get a hearing among evangelicals than David Wells' more combative *No Place for Truth: Or*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology and his more recent *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams.* But I think we would do well to read these evangelical authors together, for their diagnosis of the sorry state of evangelical scholarship—or, more accurately, their analysis of why American evangelicals have such a hard time nurturing the habits of mind required to produce quality scholarship—complement each other.

How bad do Noll and Wells think things are? After dismissing evidence for a resurgence in Christian scholarship as "accidents of personal history," Noll observes that even when the evangelical heritage is not actually a deterrent to "God-honoring thought," one finds little encouragement for the life of the mind in evangelical Protestantism. The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is no evangelical mind. Wells, a professor of Systematic Theology at Gordon-Conwell, a major evangelical seminary, is no less pessimistic. He reports that in recent years he has watched "with growing disbelief as the evangelical church has cheerfully plunged into astounding theological illiteracy," a phenomenon his recent books have tried to explain.

While Noll and Wells agree that contemporary evangelical Protestantism does not encourage the habits and dispositions necessary to sustain the life of the mind, they locate the source of the problem somewhat differently. This difference seems to turn in large measure on their understanding of the relationship between contemporary evangelicals and their evangelical heritage, especially fundamentalism.

Noll admits that fundamentalism preserved essential aspects of orthodox Christianity, but argues that the lingering effects of certain "theological innovations" central to the fundamentalist movement, particularly dispensationalism, Pentecostalism, and holiness spirituality, continue to wreak havoc on the evangelical community. His chapter on the "The Intellectual Disaster of Fundamentalism" can be summed up by his quotation from Nathan Hatch:

> Let me suggest somewhat whimsically that the heritage of fundamentalism was to Christian learning for evangelicals like Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution [was] for the Chinese. Both divorced a generation from mainline academia, thus making reintegration [into larger worlds of learning] a difficult, if not bewildering task.

Toward the end of this chapter Noll anticipates a plausible objection to his story: "Surely we are flogging a dead horse by being so preoccupied with beliefs and practices from the early twentieth century that must now exert only a residual effect on the evangelical community." While Noll admits, for instance, that "the specific theological propositions of dispensationalism probably do not have quite the importance across the evangelical spectrum that they once did," he insists that "fundamentalist intellectual habits . . . have been more resilient than fundamentalism itself." It is not so much the specific tenets of dispensational, holiness, and Pentecostal theologies that are at issue for a more general consideration of the intellect, but rather "the patterns of thinking encouraged by these theologies."

In sum, Noll thinks fundamentalism was such a complete intellectual disaster that contemporary evangelicals' contribution to the life of the mind will remain scandalous until they go beyond it. What sporadic intellectual activity evangelicals *do* display points to their only intellectual hope:

> Where evangelicals sift fundamentalist theology and spirituality to retain traditional Christian orthodoxy, where they are able to benefit from other Christian traditions, and where they make use of learning from the world more generally, then thinking for the glory of God has taken place.

The main points of Noll's criticism of fundamentalism are indisputable. But perhaps the current sad state of affairs is due less to a fundamentalist hangover than to even more disturbing *new* trends within evangelicalism itself, trends with a more tenuous link to a fundamentalist past than suggested by Noll.

Here Wells proposes that evangelicals have leapt from the fundamentalist frying pan into the fire of modernity. Wells suggests that modern evangelicals are not up to the task of sifting the fundamentalist chaff from the orthodox Protestant wheat largely because they no longer have the theological resources to do so.

> Being evangelical has come to mean simply that one has had a certain kind of religious experience that gives color to the private aspects of daily life but in which few identifiable theological elements can be discerned or, as it turns out, are necessary. Evangelical faith is pursued as a matter of internal fascination but abandoned as a matter of external and public relevance. . . .

For contemporary Evangelicals, "to believe that God can work dramatically within the narrow fissure of internal experience" is sufficient.

> They have lost interest . . . in what the doctrines of creation, common grace, and providence once meant for Christian believers, and even in those doctrines that articulate Christ's death, such as justification, redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I don't know whether Noll would take issue with all this, but Wells' criticism is distinct from Noll's because he understands this evangelical "turn inward" toward the self to be of more recent origin, distinguishable from fundamentalism in important respects.

This turn toward the self is also a strategic retreat from the world, says Wells, no less than that of the fundamentalists of the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. At least then fundamentalists knew that they were "cognitive aliens within the culture" and thus "used doctrine to define their own cultural boundaries. Doctrine served to seal in believers and seal out unbelievers. As a result, their commitment to the formal and material principles of Protestantism was unyielding." But in one crucial respect contemporary evangelicals are even worse off than the fundamentalists. The new turn inward to the "self"

> is not the kind of retreat that the fundamentalists engineered, preserving their view of the world by separating themselves from the unbelieving world outside. It is the retreat into internal privacy, into a world that need never come to terms with the unbelieving world outside. The evangelical form of separation is as real as was that of the fundamentalists; it is simply not as effective, and it is much more damaging to the Protestantism of which they are heirs.

"Evangelicals, no less than liberals before them whom they have berated," declares Wells, "have now abandoned doctrine in favor of 'life,'" a "life" defined by inward "experience" emptied of cognitive content.

Noll accounts for the scandal of the evangelical mind by seeing it as a defective attachment to its fundamentalist history. For Wells, the scandal of the evangelical mind stems more from what it has in common with the very modernism and liberalism evangelicals' fundamentalist parents and grandparents rejected.

> Without a sharp, cogent, differentiating identity, evangelicals, no less than liberals before them, are simply absorbed into the conventions of the modern world in which they live. It is no mystery, therefore, why they are failing to outthink their cognitive opponents. The reason is that they are not that different from these opponents, and the motivation to outthink them is no longer compelling.

Who's right? I suspect they both are. A large part of evangelical Protestantism continues to be burdened by the legacy of fundamentalism. And a large part has been given over to the worst aspects of a uniquely modern brand of subjectivistic pietism that makes cognitive engagement irrelevant and a recovery of a vibrant Protestant orthodoxy next to impossible. This should not be surprising given that "evangelical Protestantism" is such a wide and diverse phenomenon in the first place. But if this is indeed the case, then the scandal of the evangelical mind is greater than either Wells or Noll suggests individually. And that's pretty scandalous.

KEITH PAVLISCHEK *is the Director of Crossroads, an educational ministry of Evangelicals for Social Action, and the author of* John Courtney Murray and the Dilemma of Religious Toleration.

J. Daryl Charles

In the early to mid 1970s, during the aftermath of the "Jesus Movement," a popular evangelical apologist was fond of provoking his audience: "If Jesus is the answer, what is the question?" Over two decades later, though the cultural climate has changed, that provocation remains every bit as relevant. Indeed, what questions should evangelicals be asking?

A similar concern surfaced in a recent lunch discussion among friends. Someone probed further. "Where are all the evangelical thinkers?" Disturbed at the paucity of names that came to mind, the group was left to concede that, more often than not, influential *Catholic* thinkers—whether philosophers, ethicists, or social critics—had played a greater role in stimulating each person's intellectual development.

Protestant evangelicals would do well to ponder those unsettling questions. What is the nature of the question we should be asking in light of the Church's cultural mandate? And where are the evangelical thinkers of our day? It is such questions that constitute the burden of Mark Noll's book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind.*

Prof. Noll knows whereof he speaks. Having taught for many years at a leading institution associated with the Christian College Coalition, he is able to document with force and clarity the cultural, theological, and institutional factors that have contributed to the evangelical *skandalon.* The Coalition itself, numbering close to ninety Christian liberal arts colleges of varying denominational affiliation, is to some extent a microcosm of the intellectual vacuity that plagues evangelicalism. Two extremes—the tendency toward isolated pietism on the one side, a tendency toward infatuation with social issues and cultural "relevance" on the other—manifest themselves in varying degrees at most Christian colleges.

To illustrate, many of the Coalition faculty earn their doctorates at elite universities where little regard for faith, intellectual breadth, and Christian worldview is to be found. Consequently, one of the hallmarks of Coalition faculty members, upon "re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turning" to the Christian college environment to teach, is not the aspiration to cultivate intellectual excellence for the glory of God so much as a deathly fear of being labelled "fundamentalist." This, however, is not the antidote for the sort of "anti-intellectualism" that Prof. Noll deftly critiques.

What is often lacking in the scandal called the "evangelical mind" (something of an oxymoron to some) is the development of biblical worldview thinking, i.e., thinking and learning holistically. It will not suffice merely to "integrate faith and learning," as the catalogue of virtually every Christian liberal arts college states. Such "integration" in and of itself demonstrates the false dichotomy that already exists in evangelical thinking, not only among academics but among most lay people as well. If all things—things epistemological and metaphysical, things material and physical—indeed cohere in Christ, then "integration," a well-intended evangelical response to the fragmentation of knowledge that characterizes the modern university, should give way to the notion of epistemological unity or uniformity. In contrast to "integration," which carries the connotation of mixing, blending, or kneading, "uniformity" would give evidence that evangelicals have begun to perceive the reality of *theology* as "the queen of the sciences," as John Henry Newman noted 140 years ago. Newman, it should be remembered, was chiding Protestant educational institutions for their wholesale abandonment of theological foundations and consequent disciplinary fragmentation.

In addition to remedying evangelical fragmentation, such unified thinking would also force evangelicals to draw the inseparable link between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. *Scandal* invites us, and rightly so, to "think more Christianly," but what does this entail? While it encourages serious evangelical reflection on matters philosophical, scientific, and political, as Prof. Noll points out, it also bridges the common gap between belief and behavior, doctrine and ethics—an omission in the book that deserves some comment. It matters little that evangelicals develop the "life of the mind" when the ethical life leaves much to be desired. Evidence of this "ethical" scandal, even among evangelical academics, is omnipresent.

For example, a renowned professor of Christian ethics at an elite midwestern university is caught in sexual impropriety involving students. Although his denomination censures him, he goes on teaching Christian ethics without missing a stride. A noted evangelical thinker and critic of American evangelical subculture separates from his wife, falling prey to the very tendency he has so eloquently decried over the years. A highly respected evangelical teacher divorces his wife of over three decades on the grounds of incompatibility, and his "ministry" continues unabated. An evangelical professor of sociology, worked up to a near froth over what he views as intractable evangelical "homophobia," remains blissfully unable to comprehend the Church's historical teaching on human sexuality. A robust intellect, unharnessed by an equally robust Christian ethos, can only produce a different (though equally odious) strain of the "evangelical scandal."

The utter necessity and extraordinary merits of Prof. Noll's book notwithstanding, *Scandal* contains, from a Protestant evangelical standpoint, one conspicuous omission. The one evangelical thinker over the last thirty years who, perhaps ahead of his time, described the evangelical "disaster" in forthright and unequivocal terms goes essentially unnoticed by the author. One sentence and one brief footnote on p. 223 are deemed sufficient to sum up the cumulative influence of Francis Schaeffer, who founded L'Abri Fellowship in 1955, emphasized the importance of "substantial Christianity," and, along the way, managed to write over thirty books on Christian worldview, the Church, and culture. Despite occasional criticisms of methodological unsophistication, the very minimum that deserves to be said is that this was an evangelical thinker who at least asked the right question: How shall we then live? "The evangelist and popular apologist Francis Schaeffer," notes Prof. Noll in passing, "also urged . . . more careful attention to the theological meaning of general cultural developments." One wishes that Prof. Noll, an historian, had resisted the rather breathtaking use of understatement at this point. After all, it was Schaeffer who kept probing the scandal of the "evangelical mind" by raising the question that largely fell on deaf ears: "If Jesus is the answer, then what is the question?"

J. Daryl Charles *is Resident Scholar at the Wilberforce Forum in Reston, Virginia.*

Robert Wuthnow

Mark Noll's assertion that there is no evangelical mind requires us to think hard about the evidence. A close reading of his book suggests that five kinds of evidence are particularly worthy of consideration. Four of them can, in my view, be dealt with rather easily; the fifth gets at the heart of the contemporary scandal.

1. There is no respectable Christian periodical comparable to the *New York Review of Books*. In one sense, this is a trivial concern. Would physics, chemistry, psychology, or literature be much worse off without the *New York Review of Books*? Of course not. In another sense, it is an odd concern. Would the *New York Review of Books* be as good if it published articles reflecting only one philosophical perspective? I doubt it. But in another sense, Noll's concern

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is well taken. His lament is for the lack of a distinct evangelical voice capable of shaping public discourse in an intellectually respectable way. And he is right in pointing at the failure of evangelicals themselves, rather than blaming the secular media for excluding Christians.

But I am not convinced that this gap, in itself, amounts to a serious breach in Christian scholarship. On the one hand, the influence of periodicals such as the *New York Review of Books* is easy to overestimate. On the other hand, Christian scholars regularly contribute to journals such as the *Reformed Journal/Perspectives, Cross-Currents, Soundings, Christianity Today, Christian Century,* and FIRST THINGS, and their books are often reviewed in the *New York Times, New Republic, Newsweek,* and elsewhere. At this writing, some effort is being devoted to founding a journal of literary opinion that would bring Christian perspectives to bear on important intellectual issues. Were such an effort successful, there are plenty of scholars to contribute articles and plenty of savvy publishers, interested journalists, and prominent media people to keep it going.

2. There is no Christian university. Maybe not. Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, the Southern Baptist Convention's recent efforts to rein in its system of colleges and universities, or rapidly expanding graduate programs and professional schools at Wheaton College, Calvin, Gordon, and elsewhere do not fit Noll's criteria of a great university. But what if evangelicals had a university comparable, say, to Notre Dame or Brandeis? They would probably feel better, but I doubt that history would look more favorably on them. The very logic of the modern university is to bring diverse intellectual perspectives together. We have no University of Feminism, yet feminism is part of every university. Biology, Marxism, Judaism, and Christianity are all approached better at the graduate level within an integrated setting than in isolated, marginalized settings.

Most of the interest in a Christian university has been rekindled in recent years by scholars who teach at evangelical colleges. Many would like to see stronger support for research, writing, and teaching at an advanced level. But this is already happening in limited but significant ways, even in the absence of a Christian university. Christian colleges have improved immensely in the past two decades, especially when judged against the decline in many public institutions of higher education. First-rate scholars who combine dedicated teaching with rigorous intellectual work are increasingly common in these colleges. Much more needs to be done. But foundation support is being found for sabbatical leaves and special projects, internet links are creating closer relationships among scholars on separate campuses and in secular universities, students are taking advantage of exchange programs, and many administrators are working hard to improve the academic standards of their institutions.

Mark Noll decries the waste and duplication of effort that has resulted from the denominational history of Christian colleges. The great German graduate universities founded in the nineteenth century, however, flourished because of similar competition among the German states. Competition was also the secret of American higher education. Christian colleges function within a dynamic market that fosters such competition. Some of these colleges have closed their doors, others have developed special relations with their communities, a few have risen to positions of intellectual leadership.

3. Christian scholars are no longer the leading contributors to their respective disciplines. Mark Noll points to leading intellectual figures of the eighteenth century, such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and John Wesley, and asks, can anyone now identify an evangelical who commands prominence in physics, literature, sociology, or history? Implicitly, there is also a contemporary comparison: despite their numbers, evangelicals have not produced as many leading intellectuals as Jews or Catholics.

I have trouble with this argument in both its historical and contemporary aspects. One would be hard put to argue that evangelical Christians were the dominant contributors to intellectual developments in the eighteenth century, especially if Europe's influence were included. And at present, the truth has much more to do with whether leading scholars display their evangelical credentials in public than with whether they are actually evangelical Christians. In virtually all disciplines, devout Christians have made substantial contributions—so much so, in fact, that contemporary critiques often focus on the implicit Christian assumptions underlying those disciplines. But Christians can also "pass" more easily than scholars from subcultures identified by surnames or by racial and ethnic characteristics. If there is a scandal, it has less to do with who is actually contributing to the life of the mind, and more to do with how those contributions are framed.

4. Scholars are unwilling to address their subject matter seriously within a Christian framework. This criticism comes closer to the heart of the matter, but is easy to misconstrue. Noll himself, I believe, is ambivalent about what exactly is missing. On the one hand, he argues that evangelical Christians should be addressing their disciplines from a distinct Christian framework that privileges Christian assumptions about human nature, God, Christ, redemption, and eschatology. On the other hand, he seems to be suggesting that the best scholarship is done by people who simply take the created order seriously enough to study it with as much care as anyone else. I am

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more in sympathy with the second view than with the first. In a time of growing pluralism in academic circles, it is easier for self-proclaimed Christians to advance their special perspectives, just as it is for gays, Marxists, feminists, or any other group. To be sure, some settings may be less conducive to Christian perspectives than to these other perspectives. But solid Christian theology, Christian literature, and studies featuring the integrity of evangelical and even fundamentalist communities have all become more common in recent years. The harder task is to take one's subject matter seriously enough to understand it from many different perspectives. For if that is the goal, then good Christian scholarship may be virtually indistinguishable from scholarship done by anyone else. In my own discipline of sociology, for instance, studies of impoverished families, community service, personal morality, health reform, sexuality, and values have all flourished in recent years—much of it is compatible with a Christian worldview, and yet little of it flaunts that perspective.

I think Noll provides the best advice in the concluding paragraph of his book, suggesting that the Christian endeavor is ultimately not a search for the mind but a search for God. That quest is rightly going to run afoul of popular labels, even labels as worthy as evangelicalism. Truly searching for God requires having faith that God is sufficiently great to be evident in more ways than we may imagine and sufficiently mysterious to remain only partly disclosed in all intellectual endeavors.

5. American evangelicalism is an intellectual embarrassment. Noll complains that seventy-five million evangelicals—who attend church far more often than other Americans—ought to be doing better at supporting intellectual work; instead, they have succumbed to a cultural style of activism, populism, pragmatism, and utilitarianism. Among other things, this means that intellectuals who may be evangelical by disposition or background are frequently embarrassed to identify themselves as such. It also means that evangelicals get a bad press from secular intellectuals. And it means that evangelical churches do little to raise money for top-notch Christian academic endeavors, such as colleges or journals, and that bright young people are often discouraged from pursuing academic careers.

Noll does not depict evangelicals as a righteous remnant, disdainful of intellectual work because it runs counter to their faith. Rather, he suggests that evangelicals are thoroughly a product of American culture. In fact, I would go further: American evangelicalism is the quintessential adaptation to a society dominated by the marketplace and consumerism. It is such a late-twentieth-century phenomenon that most evangelicals would hardly recognize themselves in Jonathan Edwards or George Whitefield. To be sure, evangelicals are generally devout, church-going Christians who take the Bible seriously and try to live in obedience to their Lord. But study after study shows that they seldom understand the Bible very well, know little about theology, buy heavily into the therapeutic culture of feel-good-ism, and are caught up in a cycle of overspending and consumption like everyone else. In my view, this is the real scandal of American evangelicalism.

Robert Wuthnow *is the Gerhard R. Andlinger Professor of Social Sciences and Director of the Center for the Study of American Religion at Princeton University. His most recent book is* God and Mammon in America *(Free Press).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Dutch Master and the Good Life

Philip Bess

What follows is prompted not by a cigar, but rather a painting by the Dutch (strictly speaking, Flemish) master Jan Van Eyck. "The Mystic Adoration of the Lamb" is the central painting of twenty panels of various sizes completed in 1432 that together constitute the Ghent Altarpiece. Since the time of its completion Van Eyck's painting has been regarded as a major masterpiece of the northern European renaissance, noteworthy for its advancements in the use of oils, for the quality of its color, and for the realism of its portrayal of the natural world. These are but some of the reasons for its continuing importance, however, and here I propose to consider another: Van Eyck's portrayal of the relationship of architecture and of cities to the good life for human beings.

Van Eyck's painting is first and foremost a representation of the Christian understanding of the good life. This can perhaps be described most succinctly as redeemed humanity living eternally with knowledge and in praise of God, where (as the twenty-first chapter of Revelation puts it)

> The dwelling of God is with men [and clearly in Van Eyck's view, women] . . . and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.

The instrument of this salvation, Christ, is central to the iconography of the painting, represented literally as the Lamb of God upon an altar surrounded by the community of the redeemed, His blood flowing into the communion cup that is in turn central to Christianity's ritual remembrance of His sacrifice. Other obvious biblical and theological iconography abounds; and we can further assume that there are additional layers of religious symbolism in the painting more quickly recognizable to untutored fifteenth-century observers than to untutored twentieth-century observers such as myself.

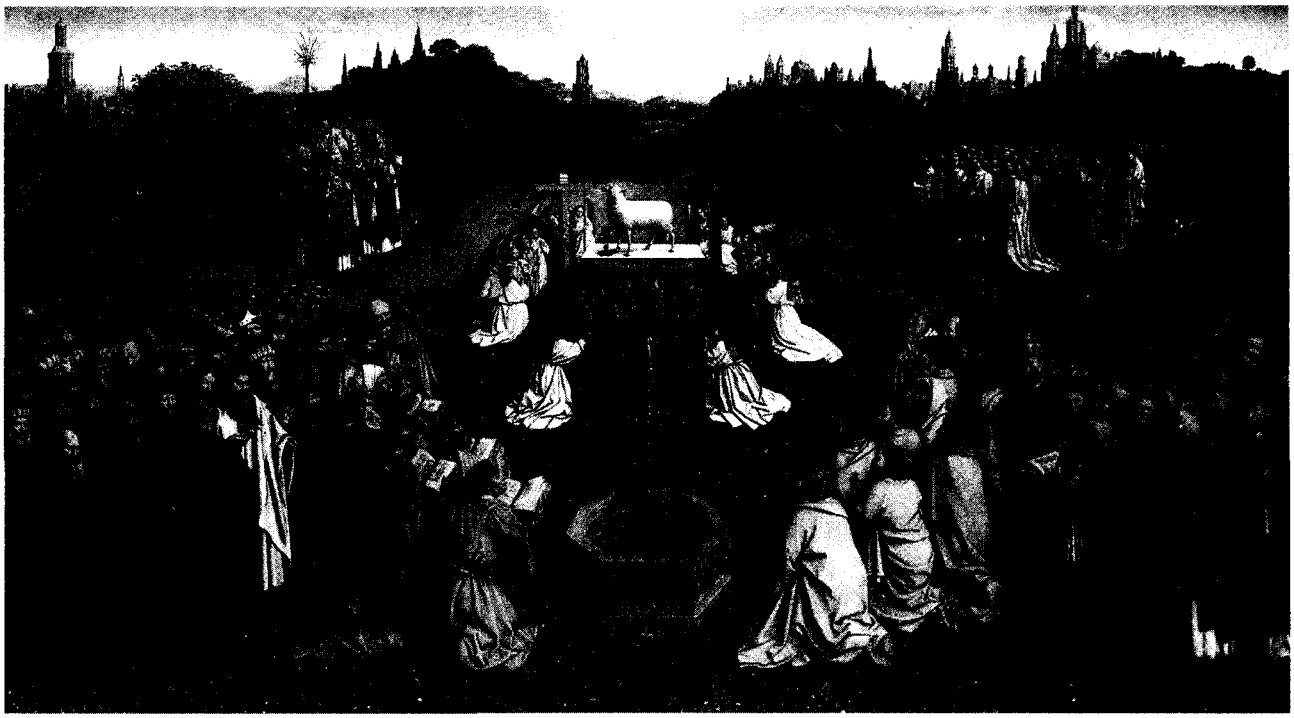
In addition to this theological order of iconography, however, there is another order of iconography that is at the same time both biblical and cross-cultural, explicit in Christian Scripture but common to the rest of humanity as well. This is the iconography that forms the context of the Adoration of the Lamb, specifically the representation of Heaven as *both* a garden *and* a city, as the New Eden and the New Jerusalem. Architectural historian Norris Kelly Smith suggests in his 1980 essay "Crisis in Jerusalem" that, more ingeniously than any painting in Western art, the Ghent Altarpiece manages to represent together the usually disparate biblical themes of Eden and Jerusalem. "Plainly," he says,

> there is an order of goodness in the world that is best symbolized by the garden—a goodness that resides in personal freedom, in mobility, and in experiencing all the sensuous delights of Eden. But there is another ultimate goodness that has to do with membership, security, and above all with those products of human inventiveness, of the imaginative human spirit, that we gather together under the rubric of civilization. . . . [This] is the aspect of ultimate goodness to which the towers refer [in the Ghent Altarpiece]. . . .

Who among us would not intuit (or at least hope) that Smith is correct: that we experience our biological nature—that I am a body—as good; and that we also experience as good our social and cultural nature—both that I am a willing member of a variety of communities, and (at the level of personal experi-

PHILIP BESS *is the principal of Thursday Architects in Chicago and teaches architecture at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan and at the University of Illinois at Chicago.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



ence) not only that I am a body, but also that I *have* a body. And yet, anyone who lives long enough comes sooner or later to recognize the inherent tensions between our biological selves and our social selves; that taken too far, assertions of individual freedom foster a self-centeredness that destroys communities and the goodness of membership and belonging associated with them; but likewise that communities themselves seem constantly tempted to tyrannies that suppress the goodness of individual freedom.

The genius of the Ghent Altarpiece, suggests Smith, resides not only in its juxtaposition and affirmation of the ultimate goodness of both the natural and social orders as both are redeemed by Christ. It lies also in the way that the redeemed natural and social orders are portrayed. It is in the garden—fallen, a symbol of the potential anarchy of nature—where we find the ordered assemblies of the faithful; and it is in the city—fallen, a symbol of the potential tyranny of the community—where we find the skyline portrayed not as rigid order, but rather as a casual assemblage of buildings.

But there is more. Tertullian famously dismissed attempts of his late-second-century contemporaries to reconcile Greek philosophy with Jewish and Christian Scripture with the derisive question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Yet the history of Christianity (and Judaism too, for that matter) demonstrates precisely an at-least-partial reconciliation of Athens with Jerusalem. This reconciliation occurred theologically in the writings of the patristic fathers and the medieval schoolmen. And I would like to suggest that it occurred pictorially in the Ghent Altarpiece, which is on the one hand a specifically Christian representation of the good life, but is also on the other hand—in its portrayal of the context of the good life as both city and garden—a representation of the good life with rational appeal across a variety of human cultures, and one specifically understandable in terms of the philosophical tradition of natural law theory.

The nature of the good life for human beings is a perennial concern of natural law thinkers. But where modern consumer culture would have us consider the good life in terms of personal freedom and creativity, the possession of wealth, power, fame, health, sexual vitality—not to mention cars, gym shoes, and beer—many if not most variants of the natural law tradition would view all of these admitted goods as less important to the good life than moral virtue (character habits of temperance, courage, justice, prudence, friendship, magnanimity, steadfastness, etc.) and intellectual virtue (habits of mind appropriate to particular practical arts and/or theoretical sciences) exercised in projects engaged in with others, *and most especially in a city*. In natural law theory, in other words, the good life for human beings is the life of virtue lived in community.

It has been evident for some time that in contemporary culture it is not common to think of the development of such habits of virtue as essential to achieving the good life. Neither is it any longer common for most people to associate the good life and the modern city in the same thought. Nevertheless, even in modern America there remain sizeable numbers of people dwelling in more or less closely knit academic, ethnic, professional, and religious communities for whom the good life is not defined by the mass media, and for whom material goods are still under-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stood primarily as means to the good life rather than the sum total of the good life itself. But to the extent that such persons do indeed understand their own well-being to be intimately related to the communities of which they are members, their lives differ fundamentally from those of previous generations in at least this respect: that there is today much less correlation between community and place.

Architects and non-architects alike frequently express disappointment about this fact, and observe that contemporary zoning ordinances and transportation policies are not conducive to the creation of place-specific communities—by which they typically mean pedestrian-friendly towns and urban neighborhoods with distinctive, perhaps even beautiful, physical and spatial characteristics. But while their observation is correct, as diagnosis it seems incomplete, requiring sharper distinctions with respect to the degree to which modern towns, cities, and suburbs are and are not "communities." Communities, as the word suggests, are defined by their common purposes; and if the rules and practices of any specific community are not directed toward the achievement of common purposes, is there in fact a community? Modern zoning laws and economic and transportation policies are paradoxical in this sense. That is, the ends to which they are directed are typically the freedom and economic success of individual developers and entrepreneurs, and the easy movement of automobiles; yet while the former ends are in an immediate sense both good and necessary to the common good of any town or city, and the latter end a desirable convenience, neither can ultimately in and of itself form the basis of any community that defines itself with reference to the good life understood as the life of moral and intellectual virtue.

Communities of various sizes come into being to pursue various goals. We speak of the architectural community, or the legal community, or the academic community, or the business community. A choir or an orchestra is a community; a football team is a community; the local parish is a community; the crew of the fictional starship Enterprise is a community. In what sense may we speak of these as communities? It is not because their members all have warm fuzzy feelings about each other, though we would expect such communities to engender friendships. And it is not because they are necessarily democratic (though some may be) nor because they have egalitarian rather than hierarchical social relations, or vice-versa. Rather, they are communities because they pursue certain objectives in common, because they recognize the importance of specific roles performed for the achievement of those objectives, and because their members recognize that their own individual good is directly related to the achievement of their common good.

Each of these communities exists for highly specific purposes; and most of us typically find ourselves at any given time to be members of several such communities. We are members of communities long before we are aware that we are, which is part of what prompted Aristotle to characterize human beings as political animals. But is there any community that exists not simply for specific and limited ends, but for the sake of the good life itself, both for individuals and for more limited and specific communities like those I have cited? There is. That community is the city. Such, at any rate, is the view of the city we can attribute to Aristotle, to Jan Van Eyck, to Norris Kelly Smith—and to the Christian church itself, existing simultaneously as a community present in the earthly city and as herald of the City of God. In this view of traditional urbanism, the city is that collection of practices and institutions the cumulative purpose of which is to enable its members to live a good life.

One can speak of several types of order that are characteristic of any good city, at any time and any place. A good city is quite clearly an economic order, characterized by economic diversity and economic freedom, creating and distributing not only those material goods and services necessary to the material well-being of the populace but also the wealth necessary for the various kinds of non-subsistence cultural endeavors that are the marks of civilization. Equally important, however, is to recognize a good city as a moral order, characterized by an abundance of diverse institutions that are strong and influential enough to restrain the excessive individualism that a free economy promotes. Such institutions will seek to educate individual citizens in various moral and intellectual virtues, and to encourage among them a sincere and willing regard for the common good; and will, if successful, sustain the idea that the city is not only a market but also a moral community.

A third kind of order, typically of primary concern to architects, is the formal order of the city. Most persons understand intuitively that there is an important relationship between the formal order of a city and its economic order, which is to say that money (and power) are required in order to build significant buildings. It is perhaps harder for us to see the relationship between the formal order of a city and its moral order. Nevertheless, while such a relationship has become problematic in the modern city, it is apparent in the traditional city. What is the nature of this relationship, and how has it become problematic?

Consider Aristotle's argument that the best life is "the life of virtue, where virtue has external goods enough for the performance of good actions." Virtues are exercised and sustained in practices, e.g., in teaching, in government, in medicine, in agriculture, in worship. Practices in turn are sustained by institutions—schools, courts, hospitals, farms, churches. Institutions commission buildings that not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only shelter the institution's activities but also function (well or poorly) as *authoritative symbols* of both the activities themselves and the virtues they promote. And here is where we find the link between formal order and moral order, between architecture and the good life, in the traditional city. For the formal order of the traditional city—by its durability, its beauty, and its hierarchies—aspires both to embody and reinforce the notion of the life of moral and intellectual virtue as the genuinely good life.

This is historically available and empirically verifiable. Traditional cities are dense arrangements of buildings and open spaces distinguished by the proximity to one another of dwellings, places of work and commerce, recreational facilities, parks and gardens, and those buildings that shelter and symbolize important communal and civic enterprises: always and above all religious and government buildings, and in recent centuries schools, libraries, courthouses and prisons, museums, athletic arenas, hospitals, fire and police stations, etc. The formal order of traditional cities is likewise characterized by some sort of architectural hierarchy (typically unofficial, but not always) wherein the grandeur and prominence of specific buildings, as well as their location fronting on streets and squares, are more or less proportionate to the purpose and communal significance of the institutions they shelter and symbolize. In traditional cities the desire of private entrepreneurs for economic prosperity has in fact been tempered by larger concerns for the impact of buildings upon the overall formal order of the city. This is not to impute purity of purpose to the bankers, merchants, religious leaders, and politicians of premodern cities. It is simply to say that their builderly and entrepreneurial intentions were subject to a customary and traditional civic imperative: that the formal order of their city was inseparable from the idea that their city was not only a market, but also a moral entity—an assemblage of institutions the cumulative purpose of which was to enable its citizens to have and to live the best life possible.

It is the gradual breakdown in the twentieth century of precisely this sensibility about architecture and the city—and this breakdown's physical manifestations as exhibited successively in modern and postmodern (and now "deconstructivist") architecture and urbanism, as well as in suburbia—that Smith characterizes as the "crisis in Jerusalem"; and he recognizes that the physical/formal phenomena he describes are not occurring in a social vacuum. But where Smith seems on the verge of despair over the future of both civilization and the city, a number of similarly troubled contemporary thinkers (one thinks immediately, for example, of Peter Berger, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Philip Rieff, as well as the late Christopher Lasch) who have made it their life's work to contemplate our recent cultural history and condition have concluded that if there is a remedy for our secularist/emotivist/therapeutic culture it lies in the creation and/or sustenance of intentional communities that set themselves in varying degrees apart from modern culture—until such time as that culture is itself transformed, in part, perhaps, precisely by the work and example of such communities. It would be a tragedy indeed if such an idea should appear novel, especially to Jewish and Catholic religious leaders. And since communal life necessarily takes physical form, in ways more or less conducive to communal purposes, this idea would seem to have implications for architecture and urbanism as well. Let me conclude therefore with two observations and a modest proposal.

Observation one. Although they are perhaps not a majority, there are a substantial number of architects and urban designers today who are interested in their practice specifically as an art for and of the traditional city and small town. Calling themselves "new urbanists," their interest is in alternatives to suburban sprawl development, for reasons both aesthetic and moral. To the new urbanists, the prevailing and still physically proliferating suburban ideal—which we may here understand not as the juxtaposition of Eden and Jerusalem, but rather as their conflation—is not irrational in desire or immoral in intent, but rather a false and unrealizable promise because its very "success" makes impossible, both physically and socially, the good life that it promises. Their recommended physical alternative to suburban sprawl is precisely a renewed-and-transformed-and-extended traditional urbanism: the creation of compact, low-rise, high-density, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly environments, with distinct edges that demarcate themselves from the surrounding landscape and in which automobiles can function more as a convenience and less as a necessity.

The legislative mechanism that the new urbanists propose to enable such developments (in either rural "green grass" or existing urban contexts) combines traditional urban design master plans with what is called a "traditional neighborhood ordinance," a more sophisticated variation of the "planned unit development" ordinances that today govern most large-scale development in American cities and suburbs. To date, the new urbanists have had some formal and financial success in creating physical environments more like traditional towns and urban neighborhoods—most famously in the new resort town of Seaside, Florida—but less social success. That is to say, in spite of the good intentions of their designers, the new urbanist-designed developments seem to lack the class heterogeneity that one would typically find in a traditional small town or urban neighborhood. The reasons for this are not mysterious, and have to do with the fact that new urbanists typically work with for-profit real estate developers. In theory and intent, there is nothing wrong with this; and the truth is that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the new urbanism and its faux ambiance of "community" sells. The consequences are something else, however, for the "communities" being created are still typically suburban in at least one important respect: they remain first and foremost a function and consequence of class. This seems unlikely to change so long as the construction of human settlements is undertaken by "developers" rather than "founders," i.e., by persons whose ties to the community being built must be understood first and foremost in terms of economics rather than membership.

Observation two. Religious institutions are typically communities in which, in principle if not fact, community membership is based upon something other than class. They are likewise historically and blessedly ambitious and successful working as or with nonprofit developers in undertaking or sponsoring building programs to serve "special needs" populations, e.g., housing and/or medical facilities for the poor, the elderly, the mentally retarded, orphans, the terminally ill, etc. And this does not even take into account that today—even as the doors of beautiful urban churches and synagogues close as a result of population shifts—new places of worship on ample parcels of land (for all the surface parking, of course) are rising up to serve expanding suburban populations.

What leaders of religious institutions seem not so good at these days—though one can hardly fault them for this, given both the demands on their time and what should be their primary concerns—is recognizing and imagining both how new places of worship could conceivably function once again as town or neighborhood centers; and also how religious communities themselves might initiate alternative forms of town and neighborhood formation that would reassociate community with place and reintegrate different classes of people into an environment more conducive to the good of all. For the frankly dismal and uninspired character and quality of most contemporary church architecture is not simply about bad new church buildings. It is above all and unavoidably related to recent historic patterns of suburbanization, and the corresponding location of new church buildings in suburban environments.

The present physical reality of suburbia is that virtually every building is an isolated, freestanding, quasi-monumental "object building." And where every building is an object, neither buildings nor spaces can be genuinely monumental, nor as clearly and strongly embody authentically communal intentions, civic or sacred. The spatial and cultural problem with contemporary patterns of physical development is therefore not simply that they threaten to perpetuate "the naked public square," but, even more ominously, that in the contemporary suburbanization of America there are no public squares.

This, needless to say, is a complex problem, and one that the new urbanists are themselves attempting to address by means of formal and aesthetic strategies. But the problem requires more than an aesthetic solution: it requires the reassociation of genuine communities with specific places, and a renewed appreciation on the part of community leaders of how good habits of place-making can advance (and bad habits of place-making can frustrate) their communal objectives.

Which brings me to my genuinely modest and I hope not at all utopian proposal: that religious leaders (or at least those religious leaders alarmed about the individualist drift of modern/postmodern culture) and the new urbanists temporarily set aside whatever suspicions they might have of each other and take the trouble to make one another's acquaintance. Because anybody who knows anything about either religious history or the history of cities—not to mention the history of architecture—knows that religious communities have been, and could be again, instrumental in the creation of towns and cities.

The religious models for any such town planning and urban design today are likely to be either sectarian or ecumenical, or rather, probably both/and. As the third millennium approaches it is not at all hard to imagine—indeed it is happening all around us—a proliferation of sectarian communities (apocalyptically expectant or otherwise) formed by persons intent upon withdrawing from the larger world, for the sake of their sanity if not their souls. But for religious persons with sacramental sensibilities, especially Jews and Catholics (whose no less confident eschatological expectations are nevertheless considerably less time-specific than those of many sectarians), the task of community building is both sacred and secular. It is therefore perhaps more likely to be an ecumenical endeavor undertaken not only with fellow believers, but with people of good will of other faiths or even of no faith. Thus it is not impossible to imagine ecumenical endeavors at town and neighborhood building, in which a variety of religious communities each true to its own distinctive traditions attempt to establish together alternative patterns of physical settlement more conducive to lives of moral, intellectual, and spiritual excellence for all than are afforded either by the modern city or the modern suburb.

Such developments would embody a desire to transform rather than withdraw from the world, a desire to create a physical and material environment fit for human well-being. And to the extent that such environments succeed in acknowledging physically the perennial human desires for both freedom and belonging, for both nature and culture, they too will be in service to that coming Landscape and City suited not only for the next millennium but, as Jan Van Eyck knew, forever. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Forgetting We Are Not God

Václav Havel

Recently I read a remarkable book from the pen of a Czech-American psychotherapist. In it the author describes in great detail methods that have over the years enabled him to recover from the unconscious experiences that, until recently, very few were aware of at all: the prenatal experiences of the human embryo from conception until the moment of birth.

The author then demonstrates that the wealth of these experiences corresponds remarkably with all the basic archetypes and archetypal visions or stories we find—in thousands of specific forms—in all ancient myths, legends, and fairy tales, and above all in all religions. Cultures formed many thousands of years ago, cultures that developed their myths and ritual practices quite independently of one another, operate with the same basic archetypes, the prefigurations of which modern science is now discovering in the depths of the human unconscious as prenatal experiences. Naturally, there is no claim that this is the only source of those archetypes or of all the tidings contained in the different religions. It is probably only an incidental, secondary source of inspiration, one that helps us fill in the broader picture. Still, I was unusually taken with this finding. It shows that there exist deep and fundamental experiences shared by the entire human race, and that traces of such experiences can be found in all cultures, regardless of how distant or how different they are from one another.

This, of course, is only a single example, taken from my recent holiday reading. From many other modern studies—and even from comparisons every unprejudiced layman can make for himself—it follows that all human cultures and religions have infinitely more in common, hidden somewhere deep in their sources and foundations. There are principles, experiences, and what we might call prescientific knowledge that are more essential and mysterious than our prenatal experiences. At the same time—somewhat paradoxically—it often happens that the leading discoveries of contemporary science themselves provide confirmation of this and so, by a circuitous route, bring human understanding back to something that all cultures have known intuitively since the dawn of time, something that until recently modern science has treated as no more than a set of illusions or mere metaphors.

It turns out, for example, that many other experiences, far more difficult to explain, slumber in our collective unconscious. In various forms, these experiences surface again and again in the cultural achievements of humanity—and often in individual human experiences as well. In a way that we scarcely understand, they transcend what a person might know in himself or inherit from his ancestors. It seems rather as if something like an antenna were picking up signals from a physically indeterminable transmitter that contains the experience of the entire human race.

Another thing: It would appear that the whole history of the cosmos, and especially of life, is mysteriously recorded in the inner workings of all human beings. This history is projected into man's creations and is, again, something that joins us together far more than we think.

But something else seems to be the most essential of all. It cannot be an accident, or a mere concurrence of countless misperceptions, if, after thousands of years, people of different epochs and cultures feel that they are somehow parts and partakers of the same integral Being—carrying within themselves a piece of the infinity of that Being—whose very relative aspects are not just categories of space and time, but of matter and consciousness as well. I do not believe it is merely by chance that all cultures assume the existence of something that might be called the "Memory of Being," in which everything is constantly recorded, and that they assume the related existence of supra-personal authorities or principles that not only transcend man but to which he constantly relates, and which are the sole, final explanation of a phenomenon as particular as human responsibility. Nor do I believe that so many modern scientists who in their work have touched on matters difficult to understand, such as the mysteries of the origin and history of the cosmos, the secrets of matter and of space-time, and the mystery of life, have taken leave of their senses when they speak of transcendence. On the contrary, it seems to me that such philosophical speculations are an inseparable part of their findings.

I know that by saying all this, I am running the risk that whole armies of scientists and journalists will label me a mystic spreading obscure opinions. I will not hold it against them, because I am well aware that in the eyes of modern man thoughts of this nature inevitably carry with them a hint of obscurity.

Václav Havel *is President of the Czech Republic. This is a slightly revised version of a speech given at Stanford University on September 29, 1994.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And many times this attitude brings complications into my own life. I know that to my own detriment I am too suspicious of many things. The risk of ridicule, however, is insufficient reason for me to remain silent about something I am persuaded is true.

To sum up, it seems to me that one of the most basic human experiences, one that is genuinely universal and unites—or, more precisely, could unite—all of humanity, is the experience of transcendence in the broadest sense of the word.

In the United States, but elsewhere, too, discussions are beginning to take place about how the conflict of civilizations is the most probable future course of humanity.

I am not sure that "civilization" is the correct term to use in this context. What we usually mean by civilization is historically and geographically defined and distinguished by high degrees of autonomy. In the traditional sense of the word, civilizations have tended to have very limited mutual contact and, if they have influenced one another, have done so only very slowly and indirectly. Many civilizations in history had no idea that others existed. Today the situation is radically different. Practically the entire world is now connected by political, economic, and communication networks and bonds. We are all aware of one another, and we have thousands of common habits, technologies, modes of behavior, forms, and aims. It seems to me more appropriate, therefore, to understand the world of today as a single global civilization, and I would call the conflicts that loom before us merely conflicts of individual cultures or spheres.

In any case, one of the countless sources of growing tension among these spheres is the fact that they are being forced to live closer and closer together within a single civilization, and thus are more and more clearly aware of their mutual differences or of their own particular "otherness." I myself have compared this to life in a prison cell, in which the inmates get on each other's nerves far more than if they saw each other only occasionally.

Let me offer an example. In Europe today, thanks to the recent liberation of a large number of its nations, the border between the world of Orthodox Christianity and the world of Catholic or Protestant traditions is suddenly becoming more obvious than it used to be. When I travel around Greece, for instance, I clearly feel that I am surrounded by different historical, cultural, and political traditions than those I know from my own country; yet I would never dare to say that Greece belongs to a different civilization from the Czech Republic.

This modification in terminology, however, does not change the fact that the differences between individual cultures or spheres of civilization in the modern world are playing an ever-greater role and are even beginning to show up in international politics. This process was extraordinarily accelerated by the fall of communism and the end of the bipolar division of the world. The unnatural bipolar system imposed upon the world, which concealed or directly suppressed historical and cultural differences, has collapsed. And these differences are now manifesting themselves with sudden and nearly explosive force, not just in the post-Communist world but also in the West and many other areas of the globe. I fully agree with those who see in this reality the seeds of one of the most serious threats to humanity in the coming era.

The role of the intellectual is, among other things, to foresee, like Cassandra, various threats, horrors, and catastrophes. The role of the politician is to listen to all the warning voices, take stock of the dangers, and at the same time think intensively about ways to confront or avert them. I cannot imagine that a politician could simply live with the knowledge that everything will turn out badly and still go on being a politican. That is why I, too, often think about ways to avert the threat that has been called the "conflict of civilizations."

At first glance, the solution is so simple and so obvious that it appears banal: The only salvation of the world today, now that the two biggest and most monstrous totalitarian utopias humanity has ever known—Nazism and communism—have fortunately collapsed, is the rapid dissemination of the basic values of the West, that is, the ideas of democracy, human rights, the civil society, and the free market. The most dynamic civilization of the last millennium—evolved from a blending of classical, Christian, and Jewish elements—has spread and has imprinted its character on the entire global civilization. It has created and developed these values and demonstrated that respect for them will guarantee the greatest degree of human freedom, justice, and prosperity.

Yet even if this blueprint appears to Western man as the best and perhaps the only one possible, it has left much of the world unsatisfied. In such a situation, to hope that democracy will be easily expanded and that this in itself will avert a conflict of cultures would be worse than foolish.

It can be observed, for instance, that many politicians or regimes espouse these ideas in words but do not apply them in practice. Or they give them an entirely different content than the West gives them. Very often we hear it said that these concepts are so closely bound to the Euro-American cultural tradition that they are simply not transferable to other milieus, or that they are only a lofty-sounding disguise of the demoralizing and destructive spirit of the West. The main source of the objections would seem to be what many societies see as the inevitable product or by-product of these values: moral relativism, materialism, the denial of any kind of spirituality, a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

proud disdain for everything supra-personal, a profound crisis of authority and the resulting general decay, a frenzied consumerism, a lack of solidarity, the selfish cult of material success, the absence of faith in a higher order of things or simply in eternity, an expansionist mentality that holds in contempt everything that in any way resists the dreary standardization and rationalism of technical civilization. Thus, people in many parts of the world are of two minds. On the one hand, they long for the prosperity they see in the West; on the other, they reject the importation of Western values and lifestyles as the work of the devil. And if some distant culture does adapt to contemporary technical civilization and prospers, it frequently happens in a way that gives Western democrats goose pimples.

In short, democracy in its present Western form arouses skepticism and mistrust in many parts of the world.

I admit that I, too, am not entirely satisfied with this recipe for saving the world, at least not in the form offered today. Not because it is bad, or because I would give preference to other values. It does not satisfy me because it is hopelessly half-baked. In fact, it is really only half a recipe. I am convinced that if this were not the case, it would not evoke the great mistrust that it does.

The reason for this mistrust does not, I think, lie in some kind of fundamental opposition in most of the world to democracy as such and to the values it has made possible. It lies in something else: the limited ability of today's democratic world to step beyond its own shadow, or rather the limits of its own present spiritual and intellectual condition and direction, and thus its limited ability to address humanity in a genuinely universal way. As a consequence, democracy is seen less and less as an open system best able to respond to people's basic needs, that is, as a set of possibilities that continually must be sought, redefined, and brought into being. Instead, democracy is seen as something given, finished, and complete as is, something that the more enlightened purchase and the less enlightened do not.

In other words, it seems to me that the mistake lies not only in the backward receivers of exported democratic values, but in the present form or understanding of those values, in the climate of the civilization with which they are directly connected, or seem to be connected in the eyes of a large part of the world. And that means, of course, that the mistake also lies in the way those values are exported, which often betrays an attitude of superiority and contempt for all those who hesitate automatically to accept the offered goods.

What then is that other, missing side of the democratic solution? What is lacking in the only meaningful way of dealing with future conflicts between cultures? Wherein lies that forgotten dimension of democracy that could give it universal resonance?

I am convinced that it lies in what I have already tried to suggest—in that spiritual dimension that connects all cultures and in fact all humanity. If democracy is not only to survive but to expand and resolve those conflicts of cultures, then in my opinion it must rediscover and renew its own transcendental origins. It must renew its respect for that nonmaterial order which is not only above us but also in us and among us, and which is the only possible and reliable source of man's respect for himself, for others, for the order of nature, for the order of humanity, and thus for secular authority as well.

The loss of this respect always leads to loss of respect for everything else—from the laws people have made for themselves, to the lives of their neighbors and of our living planet. The relativization of all moral norms, the crisis of authority, the reduction of life to the pursuit of immediate material gain without regard for its general consequences—the very things Western democracy is most criticized for—do not originate in democracy but in that which modern man has lost: his transcendental anchor, and along with it the only genuine source of his responsibility and self-respect. It is because of this loss that democracy is losing much of its credibility.

The separation of executive, legislative, and judicial powers, the universal right to vote, the rule of law, freedom of expression, the inviolability of private ownership, and all the other aspects of democracy as a system that ought to be the least unjust and the least capable of violence—these are merely technical instruments that enable man to live in dignity, freedom, and responsibility. But in and of themselves, they cannot guarantee human dignity, freedom, and responsibility. The source of these basic human potentialities lies elsewhere: in man's relationship to that which transcends him. I think the fathers of American democracy knew this very well.

Were I to compare democracy to life-giving radiation, I would say that while from the political point of view it is the only hope for humanity, it can only have a beneficial impact on us if it resonates with our deepest inner nature. And if part of that nature is the experience of transcendence in the broadest sense of the word, that is, the respect of man for that which transcends him, without which he would not be and of which he is an integral part, then democracy must be imbued with the spirit of that respect if it is to have a chance of success.

In other words, if democracy is to spread successfully throughout the world and if civic coexistence and peace are to spread with it, then this must happen as part of an endeavor to find a new and genuinely universal articulation of that global human experience which even we, Western intellectuals, are once more beginning to recollect, one that connects us with the mythologies and religions of all cultures

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and opens for us a way to understand their values. It must expand simply as an environment in which we may all engage in a common quest for the general good.

That of course presupposes that first, our own democracies will once more become places for quest and creation, for creative dialogue, for realizing the common will, and for responsibility, and that they will cease to be mere battlegrounds of particular interests. Planetary democracy does not yet exist, but our global civilization is already preparing a place for it: It is the very Earth we inhabit, linked with Heaven above us. Only in this setting can the mutuality and the commonality of the human race be newly created, with reverence and gratitude for that which transcends each of us singly and all of us together. The authority of a world democratic order simply cannot be built on anything other than the revitalized authority of the universe.

The effective expansion of democracy therefore presupposes a critical self-examination, a process that will lead to its internalization. More than that, this seems to be the key to saving today's global civilization as a whole, not only from the danger of a conflict of cultures but from the many other dangers that threaten it.

Obviously, this is easy to say but hard to bring about. Unlike many ideological utopians, fanatics, and dogmatists, and a thousand more or less suspect prophets and messiahs who wander about this world as a sad symptom of its helplessness, I do not possess any special recipe to awaken the mind of man to his responsibility to the world and for the world.

Two things, however, appear to me to be certain.

First, this internalization of democracy today can scarcely take the form of some new doctrine, that is, a collection of dogmas and rituals. Such a thing would probably have exactly the opposite effect: To all the mutually distrustful cultural currents there would only be added others, ones that would be very artificial because they would not have grown out of the nourishing soil of mythmaking eras. If a renaissance of spirituality does occur, it will far more likely be a multileveled and multicultural reflection, with a new political ethos, spirit, or style, and will ultimately give rise to a new civic behavior.

And second: Given its fatal incorrigibility, humanity probably will have to go through many more Rwandas and Chernobyls before it understands how unbelievably shortsighted a human being can be who has forgotten that he is not God. FT

Ash Wednesday in a Hard Winter

Milkwhite in his alb and still as this temple,
The priest waits with the stone patience of a heron.
I approach in the deadfall of midafternoon,
Flotsam blown in out of the snow-harrowed day.
He stabs once, twice, raking my cold brow
With the stiff bill of his ash-black thumb.
"Remember, man, thou art dust . . ."
His cello voice, half altar, half mountain,
Groans more than speaks my name and blame.
Stabbed and marked, I make my way to a back pew.
Here, the act seems mere calligraphy—
Cross and death and their one-day shadow.
Meanwhile I relax, regarding the solemnities
Of stained glass and enjoying the hearth-fire warmth.
Oh yes, a fierce winter for us and worse for the beasts.
Where is the mercy, I ask, in this season
Of bird-killing ice and tree-snapping wind,
This bitter winter made by the Maker of All Things?
But the heron priest has pressed the answer
Onto and into my everyman brow.
Murmur as I may, I know that this bitter time,
As all bitter things, was made by me
When I walked, winter innocent, in the old garden
And plucked in summer joy the ash-bearing fruit.

John Martin

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books In Review

How the Universities Were Lost

The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief. By George Marsden. *Oxford University Press. 462 pp. $35.*

Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education. By Douglas Sloan. *Westminster/John Knox. 336 pp. $20.*

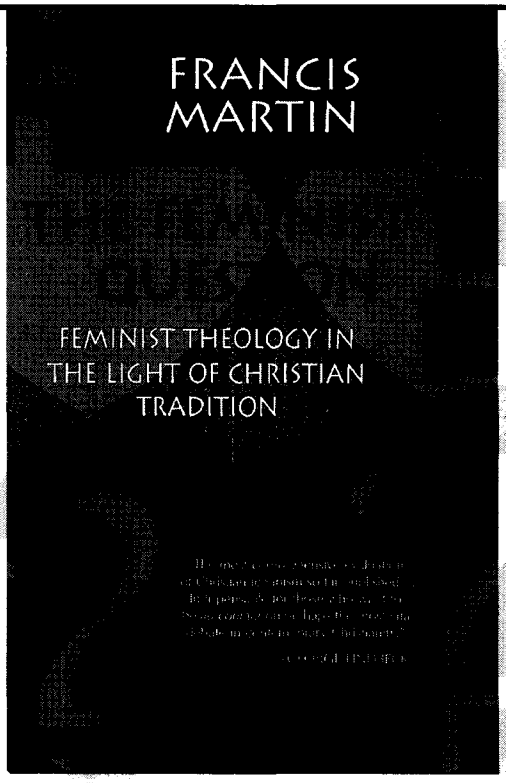
Reviewed by **Phillip E. Johnson**

The last time I reviewed a book for First Things it was Stephen Carter's *The Culture of Disbelief.* I began that review by invoking Peter Berger's aphorism that, if India is the most religious nation in the world and Sweden the least religious, then the United States of America is a nation of Indians ruled by Swedes. If you want to know how Swedish ruling power was established and consolidated, and why the Swedes have been able to defeat easily all challenges from the Indians, you can do no better than to read the two books under review here. The agnostics rule America, quite regardless of the popular piety to which politicians pay lip service, because their metaphysics (i.e., scientific naturalism) rules the universities, and the universities control the social definition of knowledge.

George Marsden's book tells the complete story in greater detail than many readers will require, since basically the same thing happened at many different universities. Douglas Sloan concentrates upon a single episode. I enthusiastically recommend both books in their entirety, but readers with limited time might consider reading in Marsden the triple Prologue, the chapters on the Universities of Michigan and Chicago, the final chapter, and the "Concluding Unscientific Postscript." In Sloan's book Chapter Four is crucial; it is aptly titled "The Theologians and the Two-Realm Theory of Truth." Once you get the basic idea, the rest is a matter of (very interesting) detail.

Marsden's subtitle says it all: the story of the modern American University is that of a long march from Protestant establishment to established nonbelief. In the nineteenth century things like compulsory chapel services were common even in state universities, and Protestant

Phillip E. Johnson *teaches at Boalt Hall, the School of Law at the University of California at Berkeley.*



"The most comprehensive evaluation of Christian feminism so far published. . . . Indispensable for those who want to be *au courant* on perhaps the most vital debate in contemporary Christianity."
— George Lindbeck

"It is difficult to exaggerate the profundity and complexity of the challenge presented to Christianity by contemporary feminism. In this book we finally have an argument that meets this challenge with the seriousness it deserves. . . . A much-needed study, one that will become indispensable reading in the years to come."
— David L. Schindler

"In seeking to locate the nature, scope, and purpose of the feminist question, this book gives legitimacy to the whole Christian feminist enterprise while at the same time engaging it in an exhilarating dialogue."
— Mary T. Malone

"An important clarification of, and corrective to, the feminist theological quest. . . . [Martin] illustrates well the gentle wisdom and profound understanding that the light of faith in God's Word brings to open minds and hearts."
— Matthew L. Lamb

"Someone had to write this book! We can be grateful that it was Francis Martin. Those in the community of Christian scholars who find the conclusions of feminist theology troubling but do not want to dismiss its challenge will welcome his well-informed and incisive analysis and evaluation."
— Sara Butler

ISBN 0-8028-0794-1 • 479 pages • Paperback • $29.99
At your bookstore, or call 800-253-7521 FAX 616-459-6540

489 **Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.**
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49503

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Christianity was just about everywhere—except in Catholic Universities, of course—considered to be the governing ideology of higher education. When William F. Buckley's 1951 book *God and Man at Yale* charged Yale University's faculty with undermining the University's traditional commitment to Christianity (and conservative values), university authorities responded indignantly and with apparent sincerity that Yale remained Christian "in a broad sense." Today, if the President and Trustees of Yale were to proclaim that Yale is a Christian university, no doubt they would be met with a firestorm of protest—or howls of laughter.

AT DUKE UNIVERSITY, famous today for basketball championships and postmodernist literary theory, a plaque at the center of the campus states that "The aims of Duke University are to assert a faith in the eternal union of knowledge and religion set forth in the teachings and character of Jesus Christ, the son of God." That was what Duke officially stood for at its initial endowment in 1924, and many other universities would then have articulated their mission in similar terms. When Duke formulated a new mission statement in 1988, however, its aims had become entirely secular in character, stressing only values like "the spirit of free inquiry" and the promotion of "diversity and mutual tolerance." The University's previous Christian identity was relegated to history with a statement that "Duke cherishes its historic ties with the United Methodist Church and the religious faith of its founders, while remaining nonsectarian." The new mission statement made clear, in Marsden's words, that "Christianity as such is peripheral to the main business of the university" today.

The 1988 statement was not really a repudiation of Duke's original starting point in progressive Methodism, however. It would be more accurate to say that the agnostic university of the 1980s was the logical culmination of a trend that was present in liberal Christianity from the beginning. To hold on to its ruling position in a pluralistic democracy, the Protestant establishment had to become "inclusive," which meant that it had to suppress the distinctively Christian and supernatural elements in biblical theology. Becoming nonsectarian meant at first only cutting formal denominational ties. Because Catholics, Jews, and eventually atheists had to be brought within the tent, however, "nonsectarian" eventually came to mean "wholly secular."

Christianity "in a broad sense" was merely a spiritualized version of enlightenment rationalism, in which natural science claimed sole authority to describe reality, progress claimed the role of God, and social reform claimed the status of salvation. By the early twentieth century, the "union of knowledge and religion" of Duke's plaque looked more like a watered-down version of Marxism (with history marching moderately forward into a social utopia) than anything Calvin or Luther would have recognized as Protestant Christianity. When the tumult of the 1960s struck, the universities shed their Christian veneer without noticing that they were missing anything. The title of Marsden's final chapter describes the end result: "Liberal Protestantism Without Protestantism"—and especially without God.

The progress of the universities from Protestant establishment to established nonbelief illustrates the principle that an establishment of religion sometimes does more damage to the religion being established—by wedding it to the culture—than it does to the unbelievers and dissenters who are supposedly the victims of discrimination. There was no fight to the finish between Christian theists and secularizers. The story Marsden tells is one of Christians in positions of formal power yielding willingly to each stage in the advance of secularism. Obviously, there was some element in the situation that made Christian (or theistic) resistance to secularization ineffective. What was it?

READERS CAN get the answer from either book, but I think Sloan makes the essential point particularly

POPE·JOHN·CENTER
FOR THE STUDY OF ETHICS IN HEALTH CARE
Newly Published!
Faith and Challenges to the Family
Twenty illuminating essays exploring varied challenges facing the family-- its decline, its present status, the media, population concerns, marriage preparation, catechesis, etc.-- by such outstanding writers as:
Richard John Neuhaus, Hadley Arkes, Arthur Dyck, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Janet Smith, Ralph Martin, Michael Medved, Joyce Little, Carl A. Anderson
ISBN 0-935372-38-5, Softcover, 308 pages, $21.95
To order, call, write, or fax the Pope John Center
186 FORBES ROAD, BRAINTREE MA 02184-2626
T/617-848-6965 F/617-849-1309

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clear. The liberal Protestant establishment wanted to combine a scientific picture of reality with the highest religious and ethical ideas. What was overlooked, in Sloan's words, was the "fact that nineteenth-century science, when viewed within its prevailing interpretive framework, was fundamentally at odds with religious and ethical ideas of any kind. This was clear to all who had eyes to see and who were able to look without flinching." All the strenuous efforts to keep Christian theism alive in a university dominated by scientific naturalism only amounted to so much flinching before the disquieting implications of the scientific outlook.

The crucial issue in the universities, according to Sloan, is the faith/knowledge dichotomy. From a scientific point of view, "knowledge" is inherently empirical, coming from sense experience and scientific investigation. This is the legacy of positivism, a philosophy that achieved its culminating triumph in the Darwinian theory of evolution. In modern universities professors take for granted that the universe began with something like particles in mindless motion governed by impersonal laws, and that everything that has appeared since is the product of a purely naturalistic process of physical, chemical, and biological evolution. "Everything that has appeared since" includes things like human religious and ethical beliefs, which are themselves presumed to be products of things like brain chemistry and natural selection.

The worldview of scientific naturalism preserves a place for religious beliefs: a place, that is, among the things to be explained by scientific methodology. The Christian religion thus enters the university with a status precisely equal to that of other comparable religious systems—of, say, the Aztec system of human sacrifice. Any individual, even a person of eminence in science, can make a personal choice to "be religious." Such choices are made on the basis of faith—i.e., subjective preference. A problem arises only if the Aztecs or the Christians claim access to knowledge. If they do that, they are claiming that their own beliefs are normative for unbelievers. Only scientists can claim that kind of authority, because what is endorsed by the scientific community constitutes knowledge, not belief. That is why Darwinian evolution can be taught in the schools as fact, however strongly the parents or students object, whereas a simple prayer acknowledging God as our Creator is deemed unacceptable—because somebody might object.

Douglas Sloan's basic thesis is that any person who wishes to assert the viability of Christianity in the modern university must come to grips with the faith/knowledge problem.

4-30 Minute Video Conversations Between Professor Mary Ann Glendon and Father William Maestri

PROFILES & ISSUES

PROFILES AND ISSUES 1

THE FUTURE OF THE CATHOLIC PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT

The conversation begins by taking stock of the achievements and setbacks of the pro-life movement since Roe v. Wade.

FVAH225 - 30 minute video with outline and discussion points - $19.95

PROFILES AND ISSUES 2

FEMINISM: WOMEN'S CHANGING ROLES & THE CHURCH

Father Maestri and Professor Glendon consider the various forms of feminism that have both promoted and responded to an unprecedented transformation in the circumstances of women's lives.

FVAH226 - 30 minute video with outline and discussion points - $19.95

PROFILES AND ISSUES 3

CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EDUCATION FOR A HIGHER PURPOSE

In this conversation, Father Maestri and Professor Glendon review the state of Catholic higher education in America including characteristics and benefits of a Catholic university.

FVAH227 - 30 minute video with outline and discussion points - $19.95

PROFILES AND ISSUES 4

RELIGION IN PUBLIC LIFE: CATHOLIC AND AMERICAN

In this timely conversation, Maestri and Glendon address an enduring issue faced by Catholics: can one be a loyal Catholic while at the same time be a good American citizen?

FVAH228 - 30 minute video with outline and discussion points - $19.95

MARY ANN GLENDON, the Learned Hand Professor of Law at Harvard University, writes and teaches in the fields of comparative law, constitutional law, and legal theory. In 1994, she was appointed by John Paul II to the newly created Pontifical Academy of Social Science.

FR. WILLIAM MAESTRI is currently Professor of Philosophy at St. Joseph Seminary College, St. Benedict, LA. He also teaches at Loyola Law School and at Charity Hospital, both in New Orleans.

Each video in series - $19.95 Any 2 videos - $34.95 Any 3 videos - $44.95
COMPLETE SERIES (4) - $59.95

alba house communications
9531 Akron-Canfield Road ▲ P.O. Box 595 ▲ Canfield, OH 44406-0595
1-800-533-2522
or fax your order . . . (216) 533-1076

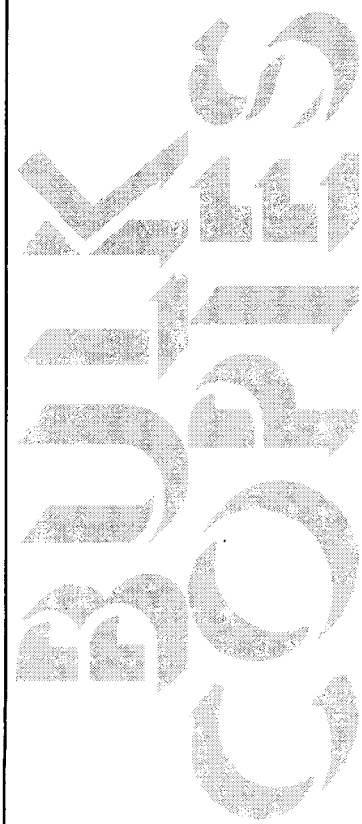
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Of course, a scholar can be a Christian as a matter of faith, regardless of his or her attitude towards scientific knowledge, just as anyone can choose on the basis of faith to be a Muslim or a Rastafarian or a radical feminist. Prestige in the university goes only to those commitments that are seen as capable of generating knowledge, however. Once science has provided knowledge (Copernican astronomy, Newtonian physics, Darwinian evolution, quantum indeterminacy), various subjective ideologies can fit their belief systems into the framework of knowledge thus provided. Intelligent people are unimpressed with this trimming and prefer to give their allegiance to the metaphysical system that provides the knowledge to which other systems must do their best to conform.

ALL EFFORTS TO assert Christianity in the university ended in futility because of the inability or unwillingness of the Christians to challenge naturalism's monopoly over the production of knowledge. Sloan's chosen example is the failed "theological renaissance" of the 1940s and 1950s that featured Reinhold Niebuhr, his less famous but equally esteemed brother H. Richard Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich. These "theological reformers" understood that a purely scientific knowledge is inadequate, and denies the reality of personhood and meaning. Hence they tried to assert that factual knowledge has to be interpreted in the light of principles that transcend what is knowable scientifically. At the same time, they wanted to speak in a language intelligible to modernists, which meant accepting all the achievements of science and of the critical analysis of the Scriptures. Thus, the theological reformers "never tired in heaping ridicule on all religious persons who rejected Darwinism, lumping them all together as unreconstructed fundamentalists—even though Darwinism represented in fact the extension of the mechanical philosophy to everything, including persons and spirit, and was a direct challenge to any theological conception of a meaning in history that transcends history."

As Sloan sums up the results:

> In the end the theologians pulled back from affirming unambiguously the real possibility of knowledge of God and of the spiritual world. They again and again resisted seeking or talking about knowledge of God for fear of the danger of applying objectifying and manipulative modes of thought where they did not belong. At the same time, however, they wanted to affirm fully and without question,



Let the Conversation Begin . . .

. . . have your group read FIRST THINGS first!

Conferences, small discussion groups, workshops, school board meetings, and religious instructional classes all benefit from multiple copies of FIRST THINGS. Its broad range of pertinent topics and conversation-provoking think pieces provides popular and profound starting points for group discussions. From Crime and Punishment to Natural Law, Abortion to Death Row, Jesus to Jean-Paul Sartre, FIRST THINGS offers fascinating ideas that are sure to stimulate conversation.

Here's your opportunity to send for multiple copies of issues at our low-cost bulk rates. Indicate your issue choice on the coupon or call us direct at (815) 398-8569. Bulk orders must be prepaid. Order today!

2-9 copies	$5.50 each	**50-99 copies**	$4.00 each
10-24 copies	$4.95 each	**100 + copies**	$3.60 each
25-49 copies	$4.45 each	*Includes postage & handling charges.*	

Please send me _____ copies of the _____ issue of FIRST THINGS.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

or Fax coupon to: (815) 398-8579

Enclosed is $_____ (all orders must be prepaid, U.S. dollars only) 394BC

FIRST THINGS BULK SALES DEPARTMENT, 129 PHELPS AVE., SUITE 312, ROCKFORD, IL 61108

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Disciples and Democracy

Religious Conservatives and the Future of American Politics

Edited by MICHAEL CROMARTIE

The religious right, currently the subject of intense press attention, is here scrutinized by both insiders and outside observers. Journalists **Fred Barnes** (*The New Republic*), **Michael Barone** (*U.S. News & World Report*), and **E. J. Dionne** (*Washington Post*), activists **Ralph Reed** (Christian Coalition) and **Michael Farris**, and scholarly analysts **John Green**, **Allen Hertzke**, **Michael Horowitz**, **Richard Land**, and **George Weigel** examine the agenda of religious conservatives, their influence upon the 1992 election, and whether and how they can increase their political influence in the next four years. In a foreword, **Irving Kristol** calls religious conservatives "the very core of an emerging American conservatism." The volume, published jointly by the Ethics and Public Policy Center and Eerdmans, includes brief comments by eighteen other informed observers as well. **147 pages, paper, $12.99** ■ ISBN 0-8028-0847-6

■ "*The rise of the religious conservatives is a hot topic, and this is an indispensable study and critique. A lively, solid, and serious piece of work.*" — MICHAEL NOVAK, American Enterprise Institute

■ "*A highly thought-provoking and well-balanced introduction to a subject that is not just difficult but combustible.*" — CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, syndicated columnist

■ "*This profound book goes to the heart of questions faced daily in newsrooms, on school boards, in Congress, and at the dinner table. It is a serious and significant exploration of the intersection of rights, responsibility, community, and tolerance, conducted in a fashion that illuminates the discussion and enlightens the reader.*" — THOMAS BYRNE EDSALL, political reporter, *Washington Post*

■ "*An interesting and compelling analysis of a very significant political phenomenon.*" — TIMOTHY J. RUSSERT, moderator, "Meet the Press"

■ "*Fresh exposition, examination, and debate of a topic weighed down by the worst kinds of misrepresentation. For those who follow the evolution of our contemporary culture war, 'Disciples and Democracy' is essential reading.*" — JAMES DAVISON HUNTER, University of Virginia

ETHICS AND PUBLIC POLICY CENTER
1015 15th Street NW, #900 ■ Washington, D.C. 20005 ■ (202) 682-1200 ■ fax (202) 408-0632

Please send me *Disciples and Democracy*: _____ copies paper, at $12.99 each.

_____ Cost of book(s)
_____ D.C. residents: add 7% sales tax
_____ Postage ($1.50 first copy, $.50 each add'l)
_____ TOTAL

Make checks payable to Ethics and Public Policy Center

❑ I have enclosed $_____.

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

❑ Bill my ❑ VISA or ❑ MasterCard account.

CARD NUMBER _____ EXPIRES _____

SIGNATURE _____

Ethics and Public Policy Center
1015 Fifteenth Street NW, #900 ■ Washington, D.C. 20005 ■ (202) 682-1200

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lest they be thought religious fundamentalists, the same objective, analytic modes of modern science and historical analysis in every other domain besides faith. The result was a split that forced the theological reformers back onto faith presuppositions whenever they spoke about religion, and onto an increasing reliance on naturalistic approaches to the sensible world whenever they wanted to speak about ethics, science, or knowledge in general.

In short, whenever the chips were down, the theological reformers effectively conceded that naturalism is true. It should come as no surprise that a theological movement based upon a tacit acceptance of naturalistic metaphysics was blown away like so much dust when the passionate political movements of the 1960s emerged. Exactly the same fate awaits all religious revivals, however impressive they may seem for a time, if they lack the nerve or the intellectual resources to challenge the cultural assumption that knowledge comes only from naturalism.

Faith and Empire

EMPIRE TO COMMONWEALTH: CONSEQUENCES OF MONOTHEISM IN LATE ANTIQUITY. By GARTH FOWDEN. *Princeton University Press. 205 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by **Thomas F. X. Noble**

THIS SMART, elegant book is about many things. Here is one of them:

> When Constantine became a Christian he created a golden opportunity to unite a wholeheartedly universalist religion and its abundance of scriptural authority and missionary impetus with an empire's forces of political, military, and economic expansion in order to create a genuine world empire.

Even before Constantine, Rome had universalist tendencies. Roman authorities expected the official religious cults to bind the allegiance and affection of the remotest provincials to Rome, "the temple of the whole world." Even during the turmoil of the third century, when the Eternal City's attractions became "decreasingly meaningful," a new god, *Sol Invictus* (with the emperor as his "Living Law"), became for a time the bearer of Rome's universalizing tendencies. With the Emperor Constantine's conversion, however, the Christian historian Eusebius could join Roman ideals with the new faith and proclaim the advent of "One God, One Empire, One Emperor." Roman universalism and missionary monotheism became inseparably bound in a dynamic synthesis of power and knowledge in a way never before seen. Of course, Constantine's Empire soon went the way of all empires. But Constantine's synthesis endured.

It was the empire of Constantine, not that of Scipio or Augustus, that was transformed into the four commonwealths that became the medieval bearers of the antique heritage: the First and Second Byzantine Commonwealths, the Islamic caliphate, and Latin Christendom.

In the sixth century John of Ephesus defined a commonwealth as "the *politeia* of the party of the believers." John was a Monophysite Christian (those who exaggerated Christ's divinity at the expense of his humanity), an anti-Chalcedonian. And thereby hangs the tale both of why Constantine mattered and

THOMAS F. X. NOBLE *teaches in the Department of History at the University of Virginia. His latest book, coedited with Thomas Head, is* Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages.

Used Academic Books

Windows BOOKSELLERS

790 E. 11th, Eugene, Oregon 97401 1(800) 779-1701

CATALOGS

We issue 10-12 catalogs per year in Biblical Studies, Theology, Church History, and more.
Write or call for a free catalog.

WE BUY & TRADE BOOKS

If you have any volumes gathering dust on your shelf, we would be pleased to have the opportunity to purchase them. We offer either cash or trade credit. Please call us, toll free, to discuss such a transaction. We are always in need of commentaries, specific Church History studies, Old Testament studies, and Theology by the likes of Barth, Forsyth, Tracy, or Schleiermacher. We are often in need of books in the fields of philosophy and the classics. Do not hesitate to call and enquire how much we pay for particular sets and volumes.

1(800) 779-1701

Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and Discover Cards Accepted

We Buy Books

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CAN WE GET ALONG WITHOUT FATHERS?

Fathers are going out of style. More than half of our nation's children will spend at least some of their childhood growing up without a father in the home —and leading opinion makers tell us that's OK.

Wrong, says David Blankenhorn in *Fatherless America*. Fatherless boys absorb a violent image of masculinity from the media. Fatherless girls learn to distrust all men. And we all have to deal with the resulting pathology. Blankenhorn offers irrefutable proof that fatherlessness is a leading cause of poverty and crime. *Fatherless America* documents the full extent of the problem — which affects black and white, middle-class and poor alike — and offers a scathing critique of current attempts to minimize it.

This brilliantly written, closely reasoned book is being hailed all across the political spectrum:

"*Fatherless America* is a civic wake-up call."
— Jean Bethke Elshtain, author of *Democracy on Trial*

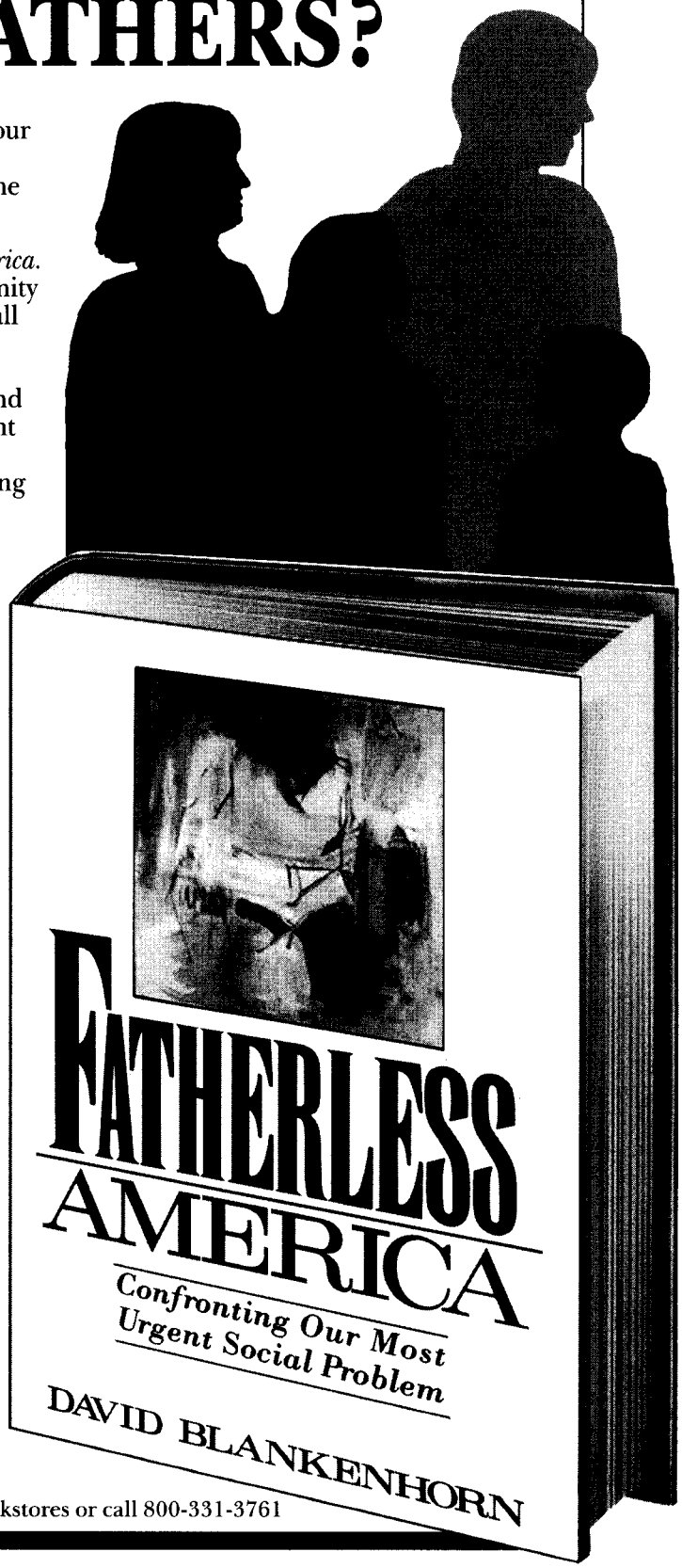
"*Fatherless America* is the strongest possible refutation to a thesis widely held in our society — that fathers are really not important."
— Don S. Browning, University of Chicago

"An important contribution to the public debate."
— William J. Bennett, author of *The Book of Virtues*

"One of the most important and provocative books of this decade."
— Norval D. Glenn, University of Texas

"Compelling....Blankenhorn provides much worthy fodder for debate."
— *Publishers Weekly*

"Ten years from now, *Fatherless America* will be remembered as the book that triggered a national response."
— Don E. Eberly, Founder, National Fatherhood Initiative



BasicBooks
A Division of HarperCollins*Publishers*
Also available from HarperCollins*CanadaLtd*

At bookstores or call 800-331-3761

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

also of what he could not do. In Fowden's telling, monotheism is creative and dynamic but not necessarily proselytizing. Monotheism may not be universalizing but it is likely to be rigidly opposed to other religious beliefs and practices. If a rigid and dynamic monotheism is linked to a rigid and dynamic political force that can create a climate favorable to conversion, then "world empire" will be the result.

In some ways Fowden takes "world" to mean any area whose inhabitants can plausibly claim that it is the world. But in antiquity there was a very special region that thought of itself as the center of the world—the band of lands running from Arabia through Syria-Palestine to Mesopotamia where the world's three great monotheisms all arose. This region was ringed by mountains that ran from Armenia to Ethiopia. On either side of this heartland lay competing powers with universal pretensions: Rome and Persia (Iran).

The Persians conquered these lands first but could not hold them because their imperial institutions were too weak and because their cultural demands were too few. Rome correctly saw that Persia was its greatest potential foe and therefore struggled mightily to control the territories that lay between Constantinople and Ctesiphon. But rigid monotheism, says Fowden, calls heresy into being. The lands from Armenia to Ethiopia that formed a bulwark against Persian advance were also an anti-Chalcedonian block (those who held that the divine and human persons remained separate in the incarnate Christ) of Monophysites, Nestorians, and others. These peoples, these *politeiai* of believers, rallied around local clergy, maintaining a belief in their own orthodoxy and becaming members of a "commonwealth." Roman Constantinople could not coerce these people and had to maintain civil relations with them in order to retain some sense that there was still a world empire in the eastern Mediterranean. Where Christianity had once been a means for the center to forge bonds with the periphery, Christianity was now giving the periphery the means to define itself against the center. And thus the ancient world passed from empire to commonwealth.

USUALLY, as Fowden notes, historians tell a story of Rome evolving into the medieval commonwealth of Western, Latin Christendom. But Constantine's unwitting legacy lay in the pattern of the several commonwealths that succeeded to the Roman Empire. The first of these was in the East and so was the second, the vast Islamic caliphate. To those who have always seen the pro-

ETHICS & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

1995 Volume 9 Ten Dollars

J. Bryan Hehir *Intervention: From Theories to Cases*

Pierre Laberge *Humanitarian Intervention: Three Ethical Positions*

Michael N. Barnett *The United Nations and Global Security: The Norm Is Mightier than the Sword*

Brad R. Roth *Evaluating Democratic Progress: A Normative Theoretical Perspective*

Fernando Tesón *The Rawlsian Theory of International Law*

Steven Lee *On Nuclear Entitlement*

Russell Hardin *International Deontology*

Thomas Donaldson *Response to Hardin*

Frances V. Harbour *Basic Moral Values: A Shared Core*

Thomas W. Smith *The Uses of Tragedy: Reinhold Niebuhr's Theory of History and International Ethics*

Alberto R. Coll *Ethics and Statesmanship: The Memoirs of Henry Kissinger and Margaret Thatcher*

Kristen Renwick Monroe *Review Essay: The Psychology of Genocide*

Recent Books in Ethics and International Affairs

Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs

[ ] Please send me _____ copies of the 1995 edition of *Ethics & International Affairs* (Volume 9) for $10 per copy ($12 outside U.S. and Canada). Enclosed is $_____. (Make check payable to Carnegie Council. Payment must accompany order. Shipping included.)

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

Publications Fulfillment Department
Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs
170 East 64th Street, New York NY 10021–7478 • (212) 838-4120

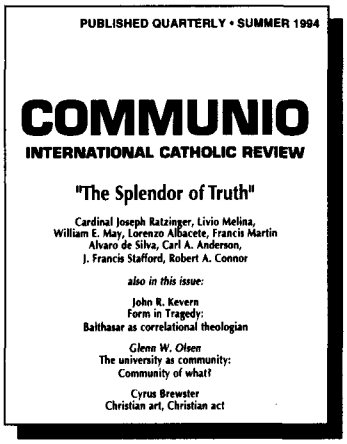
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"COMMUNIO is providing the theological perspective of the Church as it approaches the next millennium" (The Month, August 1994)

Interested in the course of the Catholic Church for the next millennium? Subscribe to the journal founded by Joseph Ratzinger, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac, and others in 1972 — **Communio: International Catholic Review.** Created as a forum for exploring the cultural and theological aspects of the Catholic faith, **Communio** has worked to assist in the proper renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council. Now published in collaboration with twelve other editions in Eastern and Western Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, the North American edition of **Communio** offers a theological vision that is truly catholic and international in scope. Cardinal Karol Wojtyla was instrumental in the establishing of a Polish edition almost two decades ago.

Communio regularly carries articles on philosophy, the arts, and Catholicism and American culture. Recent themes treated extensively include: Catholic theology and gender, the integrity of reason, *Veritatis Splendor*, and the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In addition, a recent international conference sponsored by **Communio** explored the meaning of John Paul II's call for a 'new evangelization.' The conference papers, on the theme of "The Church as Mission: The New Evangelization and Western Culture," are published in the review's Winter 1994 issue.

In every quarterly issue you'll find a regular feature called "Retrieving the Tradition," in which we reprint forgotten Catholic classics of our time by Blondel, Dawson, Mersch, Guardini, Bouyer, Gilson, Claudel,


PUBLISHED QUARTERLY • SUMMER 1994
COMMUNIO
INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW
"The Splendor of Truth"
Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Livio Melina, William E. May, Lorenzo Albacete, Francis Martin Alvaro de Silva, Carl A. Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, Robert A. Connor
also in this issue:
John R. Kevern
Form in Tragedy: Balthasar as correlational theologian
Glenn W. Olsen
The university as community: Community of what?
Cyrus Brewster
Christian art, Christian act

Bernanos, Pieper, Chesterton, Lewis, and many others. Another regular section of the review, "Kairos: Towards a Culture of Life," focuses on the holiness, spiritual beauty and true human integrity which alone can plant the seeds of a new culture.

In sum, following Balthasar and de Lubac, **Communio** offers a theology not divorced from spirituality, but at the service of the Church in the world — in keeping with the work of the pope and Cardinal Ratzinger. Subscribe now and you will receive:

- 1995 issues treating the following main themes (among others): "Honor Your Father and Mother," "Newman in 1845: Conversion and Development," "Youth and the Meaning of Life"
- A FREE copy of the Fall 1994 issue on the new **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

Please send my FREE issue on the new Catechism, and start my subscription immediately!

Names (Please print or type)

Street Address

City, State, Zip

One Year	Two Years
❑ U.S. – $23.00	❑ U.S. – $42.00
❑ Outside U.S. – $29.00	❑ Outside U.S. – $52.00

Make check payable to **Communio,** and send with coupon to:

Communio
P.O. Box 4557
Washington, D.C. 20017-0557

U.S. Funds Only, Please. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gression of Western history as a *Translatio Imperii* and a *Translatio Studii* running from Jerusalem to Athens to Rome to Paris, Fowden introduces the Nestorian Catholicos Timothy I (780-823). Timothy asserted the primacy of Ctesiphon over the patriarchates of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople because the East had been honored above all lands, the Garden of Eden was in the East, Nimrod had been the first man to wear a crown, Christ's ancestors according to the flesh had come from the East, and the Magi of the East had embraced Christianity before the rest of the world. Here, as Fowden says, was a path out of antiquity that did not lead to the Renaissance.

The second commonwealth arose from the disintegration of the Islamic caliphate in the middle of the ninth century. Fowden draws out the interesting parallels between Constantine and Muhammad. Each grew up in an environment rich with monotheism; each saw himself as the equal of the prophets and apostles; each had an intense desire to spread his faith. Muhammad produced a new secular order, a new revelation of the One God, and a new religion (although the latter may not have been among his original intentions). By Islam's conquest of all the old monotheist heartlands and the Persian plateau, the conditions for an Islamic world empire were met. But with the conquests of Egypt and Iran it became clear that Islam would not be an exclusively Arab faith. As non-Arab peoples converted to Islam, they demanded a share of the power initially wielded by an Arab elite, and the Islamic empire of the caliphs broke down into a commonwealth—a commonwealth whose common denominator was broadly cultural and religious rather than political.

In the Heart of Europe,
An Alternative for American High School Graduates

Erasmus Institute, Lausanne, Switzerland. A new one-year tutorial and residential college, emphasizing Literature, History, French language, and course-correlated travel in Europe. Located in an historic château above the Lake of Geneva, Erasmus Institute can serve as an interim year or a partial equivalent of a freshman college year, with preparation for CEEB AP exams in selected subjects. A scholastic program in the classical-Christian tradition, conducted in small tutorials, the Institute provides an alternative to "bigger is better," political correctness, and other forms of educational exploitation.

ERASMUS INSTITUTE

M.D. Aeschliman, Ph.D., Columbia, Director
Erasmus Institute, Le Château de Vennes, Praz-Berthoud 29
CH-1010 Lausanne, Switzerland, Fax: (011) 41.21.652.26.82
Or P.O. Box 236, Free Union, VA 22940,
Fax: (804) 973-9128 · Tel: (804) 973-7960

IT IS A SHAME that Fowden does not devote serious attention to the other two commonwealths that emerged from Constantine's Rome. The third was the Slavic world of Orthodox Christianity that maintained varying and complex relations with Constantinople. Here there was no heresy but neither was there a political bond. This commonwealth differs from the others, yet Fowden does not say how it was formed or what sustained it. The fourth was the Latin Christian and Fowden says not a word about it, which is regrettable for many reasons. Universalizing, missionary, monotheistic dynamics were potent features of Charlemagne's Europe. The great Frank called his people a "New Israel" and boldly contested both Muslims and Byzantines on grounds of universality. The Europe of the high Middle Ages is arguably a commonwealth that emerged from the ruins of the Carolingian Empire of the eighth and ninth centuries. If Fowden rightly says that some roads out of antiquity did not lead to the Renaissance, it is undeniable that other roads led straight to that destination. Even the Europe of the Reformation may be seen as a commonwealth in which believers maintained communal horizontal bonds with one another on the plane of culture while establishing independent bonds between themselves and God.

Moreover, the very period between A.D. 400 to 600, when the First Byzantine Commonwealth appeared, saw a series of kingdoms in the western Mediterranean that retained close connections with Constantinople, used Latin and various administrative relics of the western Roman provinces, and professed Christianity—Arian Christianity, for the most part. It is true that these kingdoms either converted to Catholicism or disappeared. But for a time they represented a remarkable analogue to Fowden's eastern Commonwealth. What was crucial here, Roman inheritances or the Christian faith? Presumably these lands do not draw Fowden's attention because they did

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not lie between Constantinople and Ctesiphon and because they did not sit atop the key centers of monotheism. But the Slavs and their commonwealth, not to mention that of Charlemagne, fail on these scores too. Fowden seems too anxious to avoid roads that lead to the Renaissance.

Fowden's conceptual framework provides interesting perspectives for thinking about why communism could not come to the aid of the Soviet Empire to produce either a world empire or a successor commonwealth. Likewise, we can see through Fowden's lens why the more admirable but no less secular ideologies of the West have produced neither world empire nor commonwealth in modern times. I am sorry that Fowden did not pursue these themes just a little. Had he stopped with late antiquity I would have expressed no such disappointment, but Fowden invites some criticism by concluding an intelligent and erudite book with a set of superficial and strained reflections on multiculturalism and the global village.

Fowden simply asserts that monotheism is rigid and that its rigidity will generate heresy. A moment's reflection on the history of Judaism will lead to doubt about Fowden's assertion. And heresy is merely one of many possible fault lines in the Christian world. Consider the many-colored cloak of American Christianity. Which color is the one against which the others are to be judged? Do religious differences alone cause empires to fragment into commonwealths? The American experience would suggest not. So one might ask of late antiquity whether it was other than religious forces that gathered some communities together while driving others apart. Fowden has thought hard and creatively about some important questions. But there are, perhaps, more things in his world, and in ours, than he has thought to think about.

The Aronian Renewal

In Defence of Political Reason: Essays by Raymond Aron. Edited by Daniel J. Mahoney. *Rowman & Littlefield. 187 pp. $52.50 cloth, $19.95 paper.*

***Reviewed by* Brian C. Anderson**

It is ironic that Raymond Aron's reputation is currently ascendant everywhere except in the United States, since for many years his sober defense of political reason was received far more favorably in America than it was in his native France. The fashionable ideologists of French intellectual life, from Sartre to Deleuze, who for so long viewed Aron with suspicion if not outright hostility, have finally, one hopes, become exhausted. The resurgence of philosophical rigor and political sanity among the Parisian intelligentsia, a resurgence led by Luc Ferry, Alain Renaut, Pierre Manent, Marcel Gauchet, and many other philosophers, social scientists, and historians, owes much to Aron's lifelong resistance to the totalitarian temptation and the literary politics that usually attended that temptation. Aron is now recognized, by all except a small coterie of leftist theorists, as the preeminent French political thinker of the postwar years.

But what has happened in the United States, which for many years looked to Aron for inspiration, guidance, and theoretical probity? The political philosopher John Gray has provided a plausible explanation for the remarkable and unfortunate turn of affairs that has left few of Aron's books available in English. In a recent article, "The Left's Last Utopia," Gray advances the thesis that America has become the focus for the left's messianic hopes. A cursory look at the United States—with the most liberal abortion laws in the democratic world, currents of multiculturalism coursing through the "best" universities and destroying what might be left of a classical liberal education, and statist models of economic and environmental regulation forwarded by well-meaning political elites—would seem to bear out Gray's thesis. Such an environment is ill-disposed to the penetrating, dispassionate vision of Raymond Aron.

We have Daniel Mahoney to thank for the fact that Aron's work may once again gain the hearing it merits in America. Several years ago, Mahoney published *The Liberal Political Science of Raymond Aron,* the first full-length study of Aron's thought to appear in English and by far the best in any language. Now Mahoney has gathered together some of Aron's most representative and compelling essays, many appearing in English translation for the first time. The title of the collection, *In Defense of Political Reason,* is perfect, for political reason is indeed the unifying thread tying together the disparate writings of the enormous Aronian corpus. Mahoney's selections and illuminating introductions touch on virtually every aspect of Aron's thought.

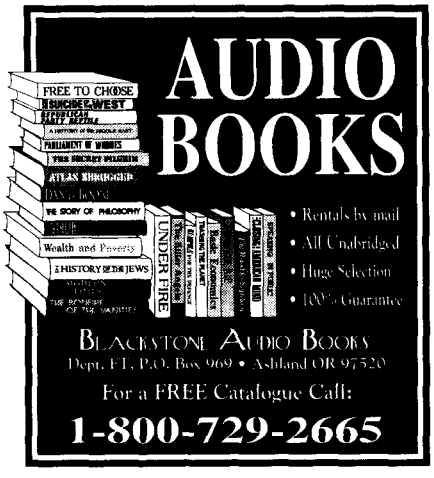
The five principal problems covered in *In Defense of Political Reason* together form the theoretical foundation of political judgment: (1) the morality of prudence, (2) the paradoxes of liberalism as a political theory, (3) the nature of totalitarianism, (4) the meaning of history, (5) the question of progress.

Ancient philosophers regarded prudence as the root of virtue, and prudence in politics requires sensitivity to context, to the historical, personal, and social setting of the moral act. In "Max Weber and Power Politics," Aron distances himself from Weber (whose influence on him was otherwise so profound) by rejecting the Weberian distinction between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility. In the ethics of conviction the ethical actor, whether revolutionary or pacifist, does what he will *regardless* of the consequences. In the ethics of responsibility, on the other hand, the actor recognizes that

Brian C. Anderson *is Research Associate in Social and Political Studies at the American Enterprise Institute.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consequences must be reckoned with whether by citizen or by statesman. Weber gave us no means of preferring one to the other in the political domain. All values are for Weber a matter of irrational choice: the revolutionary madman chooses his demon, the Churchillian statesman his, and never the twain shall meet. Aron could not ultimately accept this, although his study of Weber often pressured him to do so, particularly in his earliest writings on the philosophy of history. In this later essay Aron finds the key to the dilemma Weber posed: while Weber was correct to see the radical plurality of values of sociology, he was wrong to transform this into a nihilistic political philosophy. The ethics of responsibility and the political moderation bound up with it describe the day-to-day hopes and conflicts of men better than do the ethics of conviction.



Highest prices paid for scholarly religious books

We purchase collections, large and small, throughout the United States and in Canada and Great Britain.

We routinely outbid other booksellers for the books we especially want: scholarly books, in any language, in such areas as theology, philosophy, biblical studies, canon law, ecclesiastical music and art and architecture, patristic and mediaeval studies, religious biography and lives of the saints, prayer books and liturgical texts, etc etc etc.

Loome Theological Booksellers
320 North Fourth Street
Stillwater, Minnesota 55082
612-430-1092

And yes, we sell books too. We have the largest stock of secondhand and out-of-print religious books in the English-speaking world. If you know what titles you want, send us a list in writing. If you want one of our occasional catalogues, just ask.

Aron's prudence was not that of Aristotle or Aquinas, however. This becomes clear in an essay from the 1940s entitled "French Thought in Exile: Jacques Maritain and the Quarrel over Machiavellianism." Maritain's Thomistic defense of the common good as the appropriate benchmark for the conduct of the statesman is dismissed by Aron's "antinomic" prudence as too unrealistic, as too destructively naive for the time of Hitler and Stalin. Aron believed that there was finally a conflict between justice and success, and that the lessons of Machiavelli could not easily be dismissed. Maritain's politics of the common good, Aron argued, depended on the primacy of domestic over foreign policy. But the political was not ruled by the domestic. There were, are, and indeed will be extreme situations where statesmen, haunted by the clash between principle and necessity, must justify the means by virtue of the ends in order to preserve the existence of the polity. Aron is honest enough to admit, however, that there is no theoretical solution to the problem of Machiavellianism. Maritain's accusations of immorality, rooted in natural law, remain relevant.

Unlike the apolitical, ahistorical, abstract liberalism of contemporary theorists like Rawls, Dworkin, and Ackerman, Aron's defense of liberal society was deeply political, deeply historical, and extremely concrete. He was all too aware of the limits and historical failings of liberalism—the anomie, the erosion of Machiavellian virtue, the moral void opened up by a neutral liberal state. He would be far more comfortable with the ideas of Peter Berger, Irving Kristol, and other neoconservatives—liberals "mugged by reality," in the famous phrase—than he would be with the dominant liberalism of our time. It is not an exaggeration to call Aron the first neoconservative.

The evidence for this claim can be discovered in Aron's review essay of Hayek's *Constitution of Liberty*, "The Liberal Definition of Liberty," included in this collection. Hayek's classic work had set forth two foundational principles for a free society: the existence of a realm of noncoercion and the universality and generality of law. To these two principles Hayek wedded classical liberal political economy—the free market and the "catallaxy" of economic exchange. While deeply impressed with the rigor of Hayek's thought and imbued with the same love of liberty, Aron maintained that Hayek had, like most liberal thinkers, neglected the political.

This neglect manifested itself in four distinct ways. First, a free society depends on an inescapable dimension of coercion, particularly in its "federative power." As Aron puts it, "the direction of foreign relations remains the task of men and not of laws." In the partially Hobbesian world of international relations, statesmanship is inescapable. Foreign policy cannot be engaged in without the sovereign liberty of the statesman, but such sovereign liberty is unavoidably coercive—it can send people to their deaths, it can withhold information from the populace, it can transgress the day-to-day laws of the community. Secondly, liberty as universality and generality of law cannot be a substitute for moral and political judgment. Laws may be universal and yet still discriminate, as Mahoney notes: "Rule of law is at best an ideal but it loses its undoubted dignity when it takes on a formulaic character, when it is presented as a replacement for politics and prudence."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thirdly, Hayek never discusses the necessity of solid mores for the maintenance of civic life. Aron, like the neoconservatives, stresses the need for civic education; Hayek, like most libertarian and contemporary liberal thinkers, takes for granted the continuance of premodern traditions of virtue that provide the moral capital of liberal civilization but are in danger of being squandered when liberty decays to license. Finally, Aron is prudent about the welfare state. Like Hayek, he feels that beyond a certain point the welfare state becomes suffocating and poses a threat to liberty. But unlike Hayek, Aron believes a limited welfare state is compatible with liberty and could even preserve it. In any modern democracy, Aron argues, there is a welfare function for government, entailed by the very logic of industrial society. This prudential critique of the welfare state is taken up by neoconservatives, who seek to limit, not to eliminate, the welfare system. As Mahoney points out, "Aron's is the rarest of liberalisms—a politic and political liberalism."

Aron is best known for his implacable opposition to totalitarianism. *In Defense of Political Reason* features two essays on this theme. The first (written in the fifties) is a detailed discussion of Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism.* Aron takes Arendt's work seriously, but distances himself in several ways from Arendt's phenomenological approach. It is necessary, he argues, to analyze Soviet totalitarianism sociologically and historically. Arendt's methodology exaggerates the irrational dimensions of totalitarian rule and thereby misses the inner contradictions that were weakening the "twin pillars" of the Soviet system: ideology and terror. Not until the late 1980s did this erosion become readily apparent. Aron's conception of human nature gave strength to his conviction that Soviet tyranny, however brutal and ravaging, would not last forever. The second piece is a withering polemic directed at his long-time opponent and old friend Sartre. "Sartre and Solzhenitsyn" makes clear Aron's repugnance at the literary politics of Sartre and the other French gauchists. The cafe radicals failed to understand the constraints and dangers of politics. They fantasized their dreams as real, transforming evil into good and justifying the unjustifiable. Against such ravings Aron poses the figure of Solzhenitsyn, living witness to the consequences of successful literary politics and ideology. Spiritually resolute, refusing to confuse the realm of Caesar and the realm of God, Solzhenitsyn provides one of the twentieth century's greatest defenses of liberty and one of the sharpest denunciations of immoderate hopes for secular utopia.

Aron supports his prudential understanding of the political with an anti-Hegelian philosophy of history. Mahoney has included one of Aron's most fascinating essays, "The Dawn of Universal History." As Mahoney argued in *The Liberal Political Science of Raymond Aron,* "The Dawn of Universal History" contains the essence of Aron's thought, and it has aged little since it was written in 1961. Central to the essay is the distinction between history and the permanent constraints of human nature. There is a "history as process"—the sweeping transformations wrought by the democratic and industrial revolutions—and "history as drama"—the permanence of tragedy, political conflict, and human nature beneath all historical phenomena. For Aron history is partially determined and partially free. Like Tocqueville, to whom he felt an "elective affinity" (as is clear from the appendix "On Tocqueville"), Aron believed that the realm of effective human action is sharply circumscribed. This is why all politics is about the limitation of options and why he so excoriated literary intellectuals for failing to think politically. Within the circle of our freedom, we must choose wisely to prevent the worst, to make life and politics more humane.

This modest belief in human decency and freedom explains why Aron did not share the pessimistic notions of decline advanced by France's "New Philosophers," the post-Marxist intellectuals who rose to prominence in the 1970s. Thinkers like André Glucksmann and Bernard Henri-Levy, with their "discovery" of the Gulag and their overheated rhetoric, clearly taxed Aron's patience. When the naive dreams of utopia collapsed, France's new philosophers employed their rhetorical skills like spoiled children of the failed revolution. Rather than ideologies of decline, what is needed is prudential wisdom: history contains good and evil, progress and decline. In "For Progress—After the Fall of the Idols," the latest essay included in this collection, Aron exhibits just such wisdom, and it has been more and more evident in French intellectual life since.

Liberal society is imperfect, as every human society must be. That it is indefensible is something Aron would never admit. Although there is no Aronian "school," a number of thinkers have sprung up around the *Centre de recherches politique Raymond Aron* and the important journals *Commentaire, Le Débat,* and, most recently, *La Pensée Politique*—Pierre Manent (whose homage to Aron is included as an introduction here), Francois Furet, Luc Ferry, Marcel Gauchet, and many others. These thinkers have begun to explore the paradoxes, imperfections, and possibilities of liberal society in a way that is in keeping with the influence and example of Aron. This can only be heartening to those who have looked on in horror as one wave after another of French ideology crashed against our shores, transforming the teaching of the humanities in American universities into something inhumane. Mahoney's patient efforts to return Aron to his proper stature in America as one of the foremost philosophers and political thinkers of the twentieth century will perhaps be assisted by the exhaustion of the storm that sent those waves, an exhaustion that is in no small part due

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the steadfast resistance of Aron himself. *In Defense of Political Reason* should be read by anyone interested in politics, anyone who seriously wants to understand the complexities, possibilities, and threats of our time.

BRIEFLY NOTED

LEARNED HAND: THE MAN AND THE JUDGE. By GERALD GUNTHER. *Knopf. 818 pp. $35.*

Professor Gerald Gunther sets out in this ambitious biography to depict both the inner life and judicial career of one of the cynosures of American law, Learned Hand. Alas, neither aspect of this immensely complex man—Felix Frankfurter referred to him as "the modern Hamlet"—is presented satisfactorily. Although he is admirably restrained in handling such matters as Hand's marriage, Gunther fatuously prattles on about Hand's fragile self-esteem and about his sense of being an outsider. However, Hand was utterly engaged by the intellectual life of his time, enjoyed a wide and enduring array of friends, and was a revered judge. The liberal Gunther's larger problem is Hand's abstemious view of the judge's role. A former Hand clerk, Gunther has understandable admiration for this august jurist, but he is obviously uncomfortable with Hand's profound judicial conservatism. For example, Gunther refers to Hand's "harsh, law-and-order remarks" when in one case he wrote: "Our dangers do not lie in too little tenderness to the accused. Our procedure has always been haunted by the ghost of the innocent man convicted. It is an unreal dream. What we need to fear is the archaic formalism and the watery sentiment that obstructs, delays, and defeats the prosecution of crime." This is, of course, plain common sense, but such language is anathema to the delicate sensibilities of the contemporary law professor. Hand was a critic of judicial activism throughout his career. His disgust with an activist judiciary is expressed with brilliant concision in the 1958 lectures published as *The Bill of Rights*. As Gunther observes: "Hand attacked the propriety of the Supreme Court acting as a 'third legislative chamber' and behaving in the manner of lawmaker by second-guessing the merits of legislative choices via constitutional adjudication"—a critique that explicitly included *Brown v. Board of Education*. In a time when judges routinely make social policy guided only by their own (typically leftist and secular) sense of justice, it is refreshing to turn to Hand's eloquent example of judicial restraint. He was a judge who recognized—and this point doubtless accounts for the enduring quality of his work—"that it is as craftsmen that we get our satisfactions and our pay."

—Gregory J. Sullivan

THE PRAGUE CASTLE AND ITS TREASURES. By PRINCE KARL VON SCHWARZENBERG et al. *Vendome Press (Rizzoli). 272 pp. $65.*

With 250 full color illustrations, this unsparingly lavish volume is guaranteed to instill deep nostalgia in those who have lived in Prague and, for others, a determination to go there soon. The castle includes the Church of St. Vitus and other religious architecture of great interest. The pictures and the engaging commentaries remind us that Prague, still emerging from the madness of communism, was once a center of the high drama of world history and art. It is a sign of the blessed limitation on human madness that neither the Nazis nor the Communists destroyed the spiritual and aesthetic wonders to which this book bears witness.

POLITICS AND RELIGION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE. Edited by WILLIAM H. SWADOS. *Praeger. 226 pp. $59.95.*

Thirteen essays by Americans and Central Europeans on the history and current challenges of the religion/politics mix in formerly Communist societies. Of particular interest to specialists.

LETTER TO A JEWISH FRIEND. By GIAN FRANCO SVIDERCOSCHI. *Crossroad. 96 pp. $12.95.*

The story of the boyhood friendship between Karol ("Lolek") Wojtyla and Jerzy ("Jurek") Kluger in Wadowice, Poland, and how that friendship was reestablished many years later after the former had become Pope John Paul II. Kluger's immediate family and many other Jews of Wadowice had meanwhile been killed in the Holocaust and, as is the case with many survivors, it was with painful reluctance that in 1989 he returned to the town that had once harbored a flourishing Jewish community. This little book is being widely distributed by the Anti-Defamation League to highlight the human dimension of a pontificate that, in accord with Vatican Council II, has forever changed the relationship between Jews and Catholics.

CHRISTIANITY AND ECONOMICS IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA. Edited by HERBERT SCHLOSSBERG et al. *Eerdmans. 186 pp. $10.99 paper.*

In 1990 an international group of mainly evangelical Protestant scholars gathered in Oxford, England, to issue "The Oxford Declaration" on Christian faith and economics. The current book includes essays reflecting on the declaration and its implications for the future.

PASTORAL CARE UNDER THE CROSS. By RICHARD C. EYER. *Concordia. 155 pp. $12.99 paper.*

The pastoral care director at Columbia Hospital in Milwaukee has written an admirably wise and accessible guide for chaplains, nurses, doctors, and social workers who care for the suffering, the terminally ill, and their families. Special attention is given AIDS patients and the mentally ill.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250-1800. By Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom. *Yale University Press. 352 pp. $65.*

Another gorgeous volume in Yale's "Pelican History of Art" series. The focus is, of course, on mosques and palaces, and the authors helpfully illuminate the subtle differences that might escape the untrained eye that is struck by the sameness of Islamic architecture.

"I Come Away Stronger": How Small Groups Are Shaping American Religion. Edited by Robert Wuthnow. *Eerdmans. 401 pp. $14.99 paper.*

Fifteen essays describing and evaluating a wide range of experiences with small groups that understand themselves to be somehow involved in "the quest for spirituality." Wuthnow of Princeton begins and ends the volume with his typically judicious manner of putting all things into perspective. He underscores the way in which, in a time of fascination with bigness in religion (e.g., the Protestant megachurch movement), small groups meet a need for intimacy and ongoing personal relationships.

Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate. Edited by Jeffrey S. Siker. *Westminster/John Knox. 211 pp. $14.99 paper.*

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Richard B. Hays vs. James B. Nelson and Lisa Sowle Cahill, along with nine others. This is not really a debate, since contributors are not speaking to one another, but it does lay out some of the basic arguments on "both sides." The book is unmistakably tilted toward the "inclusivist" view of the editor, who describes himself as "a repenting heterosexist." (As in recovering alcoholic.)

Sex: The Catholic Experience. By Andrew Greeley. *Thomas More. 167 pp. $19.95.*

Father Greeley does have a way with titles. And a way of lacing truisms with self-importance. This, for one of many examples, "Surely it is clear from the human sciences (of one of which I am a practitioner and hence may speak with authority) that it is natural for husband and wife to make love, one with another." One has to feel sympathy for a someone who calls himself a "practitioner" of sociology, but it must be admitted that Greeley has an impressive array of data to back his argument that "Catholics have sex more often than other Americans, they are more playful in their sexual relationships, and they seem to enjoy their sexual experiences more." Greeley makes no secret of his contempt for Catholic teaching on the need for conjugal love to be open to new life, and therefore, regrettably, does not even begin to enter into the specifically Christian argument for sexuality as the "gift of self." He is very convinced, however, that God does want all "Her" children to have good sex, as Dr. Ruth used to say, and that "She" is therefore especially pleased with her Catholic children.

Beyond Naive Belief: The Bible and Adult Catholic Faith. By Paul E. Dinter. *Crossroad. 347 pp. $29.95.*

It would be easy, and in part justified, to dismiss this as but another in a long and dreary history of books excitedly proclaiming the discovery that heaven is not really "up," God doesn't have a long white beard, and, as the author says, "the Bible has a history." While Dinter, an inactivated priest, is certainly not an orthodox Catholic, he is sometimes suggestive in his classically liberal probing of Catholic themes from a "postmodernist" perspective. The book could usefully induce some of the fallen away to reconsider the faith, which must be weighed against the at least equal possibility of its thoroughly confusing those who have not fallen away. The theologically literate will encounter no surprises.

Being God's Partner: How to Find the Hidden Link Between Spirituality and Your Work. By Jeffrey K. Salkin. *Jewish Lights. 181 pp. $19.95.*

God's purposes are revealed not only in the great events of history and public life, but also in the daily tasks and responsibilities of our ordinary work life. That truth, while not new, is illustrated vividly in a variety of contemporary contexts by the author, a Reform rabbi. Jewish and other sources are employed to show how work need not be separate from the religious and spiritual realm, that work can even provide occasions for the sanctifying of life within God's larger plan and structure of meaning. Other topics dealt with include the hallowing effect of Sabbath observance, the corruption of a workaholic mentality, and the continuing relevance of rabbinic teaching to business ethics. (He quotes First Things contributor Alan Mittleman: "Judaism is a religion of the classroom, but it is also a religion of the marketplace, courts, and operating rooms.") A popular, self-help style belies the book's intellectual substance and depth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

The First Five Years

One doesn't want to make too much of a fifth anniversary, but neither is it nothing. Just surviving for five years is something. Most new journals do not manage that. First Things has not only survived but has flourished, and continues to grow in readership and by every measure of influence. I am grateful to editorial colleagues who do most of the hard work, to benefactors who have supported a risky venture, and, most particularly, to our thousands of extraordinarily devoted readers. If Our Lord continues to delay His return, there is every reason to believe that First Things will be flourishing twenty-five and fifty years from now.

Readers who were present at the creation will remember that this project was originally the Center on Religion and Society and was affiliated with the Rockford Institute in Rockford, Illinois. Under those auspices we published a monthly newsletter, *The Religion and Society Report*, and a quarterly journal, *This World*. In May of 1989 we went independent and reconstituted ourselves as the Institute on Religion and Public Life, combining what was done in the earlier publications in a new monthly journal that made its first appearance in March 1990. At the time, I told potential supporters that I expected First Things would have 5,000 paid subscribers in the first five years, and thought it possible that it might have as many as 10,000. I certainly did not expect that in 1995 there would be nearly 30,000 paid subscribers, plus newsstand sales and a controlled circulation to educational and other institutions. As the growth continues at an encouraging pace, I have stopped speculating about what may be the potential readership of a journal such as this. There is undoubtedly a limit, for this is definitely and designedly a publication for a particular kind of reader, and that will not change.

In this issue we republish the editorial statement of purpose that appeared in the first issue, "Putting First Things First." Five years later, we still affirm that statement wholeheartedly. Looking back on the first fifty issues, the editors believe that we have really tried to do what we promised to do. At the risk of immodesty, on some promises we think we have done very well indeed, better than could have been reasonably expected. Where that has happened, the credit goes chiefly to the large and varied company of contributors that First Things has attracted. Editors can encourage (and sometimes prod, provoke, and pester), but finally the journal depends on writers who have something important to say, know how to say it well, and want to say it to this audience.

For all that has been gratifying in the first five years, you should know that almost every editorial meeting includes intense questioning about how we can do better. The inaugural editorial says that "the key word is conversation," and notes that "a real conversation, as distinct from intellectual chatter, is marked by discipline and continuity." These five years have witnessed some remarkable changes that cannot help but have a marked impact upon the continuity of the conversation. In the really big picture, of course, there is always a certain wisdom in the adage, *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. But in the world measured by months and years, things happen. And some things have happened that have a bearing on what we mean by "Putting First Things First."

A few examples may suffice. The end of communism and the consequent collapse of socialism as the ordering principle of social progress. Yes, there are still socialists around who have not gotten the news, but something definitive has happened, and our intellectual and moral discourse has hardly begun to take it into account. This is a weird historical moment. Now almost everybody says that *of course* communism was an evil empire and socialism is a dumb idea. But only a few years ago, most did not say that, and many insistently said the contrary. We need better to understand what happened and why in the great, and finally successful, contest with totalitarianism. For the sake of historical honesty, for the sake of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

victims and the heroes and the heroines whom we must honor to maintain a hold on our own humanity, and for the sake of cultivating an idea of freedom more clearly ordered to moral truth. The end of this contest with totalitarianism complicates the meaning of freedom beyond yesterday's undeniable (although often denied) imperative of defending the free world.

For another example, in these five years there has been a marked change in thinking about church-state relations and, more generally, about the role of religion in public life. Our protest against "the naked public square" was then a distinctly minority position, whereas today there is a much more widespread recognition that church-state jurisprudence is a shambles, and that the democratic process requires the vigorous engagement of the religiously based moral convictions of the American people. I do not suggest that the ACLU has lost its punch or that there are not in the prestige backwaters of the academy extreme separationists still weaving their theories for a radically secularized public order. But, in the courts and other public forums, the ACLU now has impressive competition, while the political sea change of November 1994 has created a circumstance much more sympathetic to the public expression of arguments informed by religious tradition. So great is the change in the political climate that it seems likely we will have to pay more attention to the danger of uncritical enthusiasm for religion in public, especially when religion is promoted as an instrumental good for the achievement of sundry purposes public and personal. "We will not begin to solve our problems," a very major Republican figure announces, "until we give God a more important place in American life." The intention is laudable, no doubt, but if we are really talking about God, He is not awaiting a promotion by us. Such rhetoric suggests that we should perhaps move Him up from Number Seven to Number Two. Or maybe appoint Him the nation's Premier Role Model.

Five years later, the great change regarding abortion is that the Supreme Court is now isolated. It is obvious to all but the willfully blind that the *Roe v. Wade* regime imposed by the Court has not been ratified by the American people. The Court and the Court alone stands in the way of the political process seeking a way in which the unborn will be protected in law and welcomed in life. In its 1992 *Casey* decision the Court said that the country faces a "crisis of legitimacy" if the people fail to follow the Court in upholding the present abortion license. It is now evident that it is the Court that is caught in a crisis of legitimacy that is of its own creation. The unspeakable injustice of thousands of innocent lives taken each day with the blessing of the law continues to be the single greatest threat to the moral legitimacy of this political order. The second editorial in that inaugural issue was titled "Redefining Abortion Politics." We saw hope for change then; we see hope for change now. Even if we are wrong, this question will not let us go.

The more things change, the more things change. The now almost universal acknowledgment of the crisis of welfare and the poor as evident in the urban underclass. The near disappearance of mainline Protestant influence in the public arena, and the remarkable emergence of a conservative evangelicalism prepared to move from protest to governance. The striking steps toward rapprochement between Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants in both faith and public responsibility. The astonishing vibrancy of this pontificate's assertion of Catholic social teaching. The slow, steady, and ever more secure building of a moral and even theological foundation of trust between Christians and Jews. The widespread recognition of the limits of statist solutions for social problems, and of the indispensable role of mediating institutions such as families, churches, and voluntary associations. These are among the notable differences between 1990 and 1995. Most of them, taken all in all, are differences for the better. There are other and less happy differences between then and now: the growth of the euthanasia movement, the slide toward eugenics and the manipulation of the human genotype, the looming war against immigration and, maybe, against immigrants.

The Familiar and the Abiding

In that very first issue we spoke about our society being embroiled in a Kulturkampf, a war over the definition of our common life. That struggle continues as, in various guises, the vaunted revolutions of the counterculture of the sixties are prosecuted on every front. We have published many articles on the polymorphous perversities of multiculturalism, deconstructionism, sexual liberationism, and other causes championed by the apostles of decadence and debonair nihilism. And we will undoubtedly publish more such articles as the occasion requires. But these revolutions are familiar now; they have long since lost their capacity to shock, and are fast losing their capacity to influence, at least outside the confines of the elite academy and what passes for the arts. In the larger culture, the counterrevolution seems to have begun in earnest. If so, the counterrevolution, generally described as conservative, will surely bring its own problems. It is a trustworthy maxim that everything human, given time enough, will go wrong. Familiar debates will be reconfigured, and on this question or that old allies will be opponents and opponents will become allies. The more things change, the more things change.

But this reflection on the first five years has dwelt too much on changes in public life. That opening editorial declared, "The first thing to be said about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

public life is that public life is not the first thing." I believe that even more strongly now, much more strongly now. It has to do with age, no doubt, and with having been rather rudely put on more intimate terms with mortality. My colleagues, younger and less scathed, share my determination that FIRST THINGS will continue to put first things first. We will continue to publish arguments about the great transcendentals, the good, the true, and the beautiful, that are brazenly irrelevant to any social or political purpose. And we will publish articles that can claim no virtue other than whimsy, which is no little virtue. And so we hope to temper the sweated earnestness of the battles of the earthly city, knowing that this is not the city that abides. Putting first things first, we will for the next five years, and for however many years there are to be, take as our own the words that Eliot gave Thomas Becket:

I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink of
heaven, a whisper,
And I would no longer be denied; all things
Proceed to a joyful consummation.

FT

PROTESTANT REFORMATION AND UNIVERSAL CHURCH

At Oxford University and at Regent College, Vancouver, Alister E. McGrath is a waxing light in evangelical Protestant theology. In a recent issue of *Christianity Today* he reviews the new Catholic Catechism under the title, "Do We Still Need the Reformation?" (His answer is clearly yes, and some Catholics would agree, while questioning whether the Reformation still needs churches separated from communion with Rome.) Being a Reformed (Calvinist) theologian of considerable earnestness, McGrath's essay understandably dwells at length on the formula "justification by faith alone," and related questions about, for instance, the connection between justification and sanctification. McGrath cheers, inter alia, the Catechism's uncompromising insistence upon the grace of God as the sole source of salvation and upon the centrality of Christ in the Christian life, but he is troubled that the Catechism does not explicitly or in detail address the controversies between Rome and the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

"The Roman Catholic reader of this Catechism will learn little, if anything, of the Reformation debates over this matter or of Protestant sensitivities over Roman Catholic teaching. While emphasizing that salvation takes place by grace, on the basis of the work of Christ rather than human effort or achievement, the Catechism seems reluctant to engage with the questions raised above and does little to reassure the anxieties of any readers familiar with the sixteenth-century debates." McGrath is right. The Catechism is not only "reluctant to engage" the debates of the sixteenth century; it resolutely declines to do so, at least directly. And that for the very simple reason that it intends to be what its title suggests, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Its intention is to affirm and explain the faith, life, and worship of the Catholic Church, and the fact is that—historically and theologically—the disputes with Lutherans, Calvinists, Zwinglians, and others in the sixteenth century is far from being the most formative experience in the Church's understanding of her faith, life, and worship.

That the disputes of the sixteenth century are not addressed directly does not mean that they are ignored in the Catechism. While the purpose was to keep the focus on the pedagogical and avoid the polemical, those intimately involved in the production of the Catechism, most notably Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, have throughout their lives been intensely engaged in the questions raised by the Reformation. And, of course, the Catechism gives major attention to the Council of Trent, which was the Church's reforming response to the Protestant reformers. In addition, for the last three decades Rome has invested immense energy in theological dialogues with the various Protestant communities. As is underscored in the 1994 declaration, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," to which McGrath is in part responding in his article, much more needs to be done in specific dialogue with evangelical Protestants. As Cardinal Ratzinger has emphasized on a number of occasions, the acute reader of the new Catechism will recognize that the Catholic faith is there presented in a manner that has taken into account, albeit not addressing directly, the critique advanced by the Reformation. Whether or not that critique has been *sufficiently* taken into account is, of course, something on which both Protestant and Catholic theologians may have their own views.

Not the Most Important

For many, if not most, Protestant Christians, the sixteenth century is the defining moment in their religious identity *as Protestants*. To be a Protestant is not to be a Roman Catholic. The Reformation was a protest and intended to be a corrective; the Catholic Church was the thing protested and putatively to be corrected. To be a Catholic, on the other hand, is *not* not to be a Protestant. It is true that, for Catholics in those countries strongly influenced by the Reformation traditions, the consciousness of not being Protestant is one facet of being Catholic, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

being Catholic is not defined by Protestantism in the way that being Protestant is defined by Catholicism. Catholics (at least orthodox Catholics) understand themselves to be members of the most fully and rightly ordered expression of Christ's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church through time. Given that understanding, it would be entirely inappropriate for a Catechism of that Catholic Church to address directly and in detail one moment—admittedly a very important moment—in the history of theological and ecclesiastical controversy. Those questions are addressed appropriately and earnestly in other forums, such as the aforementioned theological dialogues. They are also addressed in catechetical materials prepared specfically for countries with an intense Protestant-Catholic interaction, such as Germany and the United States.

The complaint of Alister McGrath and other thoughtful Protestants leads to another question that has become clearer in the many responses to "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." The claim that "justification by faith alone" is the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* (the doctrine by which the Church stands or falls) is a distinctly minority position among Protestants who call themselves evangelicals. (The theological variety of evangelicalism is helpfully illuminated by Mark Noll of Wheaton College in a forthcoming book of essays, also called *Evangelicals and Catholics Together.*) Evangelicals in the various Holiness, Wesleyan, and Arminian traditions are, one may suggest, much closer to the Catholic understanding of the relationship between justification and sanctification than they are to the more rigorous Lutheran and Calvinist champions of "justification by faith alone." In recent years some of these Calvinist thinkers have achieved the status of being something like the theological brain trust of American evangelicalism, but that development is now in the process of being critically reexamined in the light of responses to "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." One hastens to add that to say these thinkers are in a distinct minority is not to say that they are wrong. Truth is not determined by majority vote. But, in response to the criticism of McGrath and others, it does suggest why it would be inappropriate for the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to address directly the specifics of a controversy that is as much an intra-Protestant dispute as a dispute between Protestants and Catholics.

While produced by the teaching authority (magisterium) of the Catholic Church for the Catholic faithful, the Catechism also keeps other Christians in mind. More than in relation to Protestantism, this is frequently made explicit in relation to Orthodoxy. One should not forget that Orthodoxy has pride of place on Rome's ecumenical agenda, and necessarily so. Only Rome is in a position to mend the schism between East and West. While the two goals should not be pitted against each other, the healing of the breach between East and West has priority over the healing of the breach between Rome and the Reformation. Orthodoxy was spared (some Protestants might say deprived of) the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Formulations such as "justification by faith alone" are no part of the Orthodox experience. Apart from the one billion Roman Catholics, Orthodoxy is the largest ecclesial configuration of Christians in the contemporary world. The theological disputes that raged in northern Europe in the sixteenth century, and still rage in some Protestant circles, are largely irrelevant to, and would be a distraction from, the goal of reestablishing full communion between East and West.

A New Ecumenism

Moreover, the great majority of the intended audience for the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* have been only marginally touched, or not touched at all, by the controversies of the sixteenth century. Most Catholics today are in the developing world, where the Catholic Church is growing most rapidly. In Africa, for example, it might be argued that Christians are, in important respects, more pre-Reformation than post-Reformation. Both Catholics and Protestants say, "We know that we are divided, but we don't know why we are divided." Does anyone really think they should know in the way that we who are heirs of the sixteenth-century schism know? Should they be dragged through the sixteenth-century disputes so that they will understand why it is so important to be a Protestant or a Catholic? The Catholic Church thinks not. On the contrary, Pope John Paul II has suggested that the churches of Africa, for example, provide an important link with an older and undivided Church before the schisms of both 1054 and the sixteenth century. It would be a great sin against Christian unity to impose our divisions upon them. Rather, they may represent "the new ecumenism" from which we are to learn.

There are approximately 1.8 billion Christians in the world today. They are with very few exceptions either Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, classical Reformation (Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican), or what is broadly called evangelical Protestant. A relatively small number of Protestant theologians are exercised by a sixteenth-century dispute over "justification by faith alone," and claim that it is the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae.* That claim is challenged by the reality that the overwhelming majority of Christians in the world, who are in the broadest sense the *ecclesia,* have never heard of "justification by faith alone," and most who have heard of it have not the foggiest notion of what it means. Some might respond that the claim is challenged by that reality but not refuted by that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reality. Perhaps so, but upholding the claim in any meaningful sense would seem to require repristinating and universalizing the disputes of sixteenth-century Europe that gave definition to the theological shibboleths by which Christians identified their bloody divisions as Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Zwinglians, Anabaptists, and whatever. That would be a terrible thing to visit upon world Christianity at the threshold of the Third Millennium. Fortunately, there is no conceivable way it could happen.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* does not reject the distinctive Reformation formula that justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. Neither does it affirm it. To address it at all would require going on to make clear that grace is not alone but confirms human freedom, that living faith is not alone but issues in a life of obedience, that Christ is not alone but always to be found in the company of His Church. Entering into the disputes over all the necessary distinctions and qualifications lands us right back in the sixteenth century, which, one is inclined to believe, is not where the Holy Spirit intends to lead the Church at the end of the twentieth century.

The theological disputes of the sixteenth century, while very important, are not the most important disputes in the history of the Church. Certainly, for instance, the Christological and Trinitarian controversies of the early centuries have been more universally formative for Christian faith. Especially in those cultures, such as ours, that have been significantly influenced by the Protestant Reformation, it is important for Christian thinkers to engage the disputes of the sixteenth century. Even here, however, our culture today poses numerous challenges to Christian faith and life that need to be addressed at least as urgently as the questions issuing from the sixteenth century. In any event, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* intends to be a universal (i.e., catholic) Catechism and is not the place to replay the controversies with Wittenberg, Geneva, and Dort. Alister McGrath is right in saying that the Catechism "must be in the hands of every person concerned with the future of evangelical relations with Roman Catholicism." But such persons will be greatly, and rightly, disappointed if they expect the Catechism to run the entirety of Christian faith and life through the grid of the Reformation protest. "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" is an invitation not to refight the wars of the past but to cross the threshold of hope into a Third Millennium of common witness and discipleship, including, please God, greater visible unity among all who follow Christ.

FT

THE HISTORICALLY VERIFIABLE JESUS

The second volume is out. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus: Mentor, Message, and Miracle* by John P. Meier (Doubleday, 1,055 pp., $40). Long-term readers may recall our rather extended commentary on the first volume ("Reason Public and Private: The Pannenberg Project," March 1992). We saw all kinds of problems with Father Meier's near divorce of the "Jesus of history" from the "Christ of faith," and with his extremely truncated definition of history and of the historian's task. Remember his method for really getting at the truth about the historical Jesus. You get "a Catholic, a Protestant, a Jew, and an agnostic—all honest historians cognizant of first-century religious movements . . . locked up in the bowels of the Harvard Divinity School library, put on a spartan diet, and not allowed to emerge until they had hammered out a consensus document on Jesus of Nazareth."

It is an experiment not without hypothetical interest, but at most it would tell us what four late-twentieth-century hungry historians at Harvard said they could say together about Jesus. And since they must say it together, the result would inevitably be reductionistic, for the agnostic would have veto power over affirming anything of theological significance. In any event, Fr. Meier has not actually conducted the experiment, except in his head, where he exercises veto power over what he assures the reader is his perfectly orthodox Christian faith.

Luke Timothy Johnson, a New Testament scholar at Emory, reviews the second volume in *Commonweal* and admires the erudition and minute detail with which Meier goes about his task. But finally, Johnson says, Meier's project is not so much the quest of the historical Jesus as the quest of the "historically verifiable Jesus." Meier's "strict criteria" for what counts as historical are, Johnson suggests, violated by Meier himself when he presumes to say what Jesus was "aware of" or why he did this or that. According to Johnson, "the synthetic picture of Jesus that Meier begins to advance in this volume . . . owes more than a little to a process of false inference, and to the contribution made by the Gospel narratives and interpretations that [Meier's] method began by explicitly eschewing." Even when Meier bends his own rules, Johnson wonders about "the yield of all this impressive effort that he has pursued with such diligence, intelligence, and integrity." The quest for "the historically verifiable Jesus" ends up with nothing more than an estimate about greater and lesser probabilities, and what is historically verifiable "is not at all necessarily what is most central or pivotal to Jesus' ministry, any more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than we can deduce from what is unique to a person what is essential to that person."

"I suspect that when the dust settles," writes Johnson, "we shall find that the 'historical Jesus' is just where he was all the time: in the fourfold testimony and interpretation of the Gospel narratives. For, if what is essential to a person is not the facts of when and where or the facts of what was said and done, but rather the *meaning* of those facts for those whose experience and memory of the person was also part of their historical reality, then there is no place else for us to look." Johnson offers a thoughtful critique of Meier's project but one has to wonder whether he does not end up coming perilously close to following Meier in divorcing fact from meaning, history from faith. The disciples' "experience and memory of the person" is not something apart from the facts about Jesus—when and where and what. One hopes Mr. Johnson would not disagree.

In recent years there has been a major move among biblical scholars to "reclaim the Bible for the Church." Brevard Childs of Yale and, on the Jewish side, Jon Levenson of Harvard have been key figures in the effort to reappropriate the text as sacred text, a text produced and interpreted by and for the believing community. This was the question addressed also by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger in his Erasmus Lecture of 1988, which was the basis of the ecumenical conference from which came *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis* (Eerdmans). (See also the symposium on the Pontifical Biblical Commission's treatment of these questions in FT, "Interpreting the Bible," August/September 1994).

More recently the Institute sponsored a meeting of distinguished theologians and biblical scholars at which one participant took his colleagues aback by asking, "Compared with all the mischief it has done, what of real significance has 150 years of historical-critical methodology contributed to our understanding of the Bible?" The question was intentionally provocative, and in response several participants suggested that critical scholarship had helped us to understand somewhat better this or that about the Bible. If you had locked up all twenty scholars in the bowels of the Harvard Divinity School library, put them on a spartan diet, and not allowed them to emerge until they had come up with a longer list of the contributions of historical-critical methodology, they probably could have done so. But the consensus out of this meeting was that the contributions were, at best, very marginal. As in *A Marginal Jew*.

FT

The Scandal of Faith

A Lutheran professor of theology in the Midwest sends along a clipping from *USA Today* about which he is vaguely irritated and wonders what we make of it. The story is about the family of the Rev. Scott Willis, a Baptist minister in Chicago. In a freak accident with a truck on I-94, the Scott car exploded, killing their six youngest children. The headline is "Still Thankful in Sea of Sorrow: Family's Faith Unshaken by Loss of 6 Children." In the account, Willis and his wife testify to their abiding faith in Christ and the eternal hope that tempers their grief. Apparently this was a puzzlement to the *USA Today* reporter, and so she consulted a psychiatrist. "Different people have different ways of dealing with grief, says Dorothy Starr, a psychiatrist who has not met the Willises. But she expects they'll have an angrier reaction at some point. 'They may well be numbed, and it may take some time for it to sink in,' Starr says. 'I would still expect these people to have trouble, even with their incredible faith.'"

Our theologian friend thought this whole business terribly condescending toward Christianity, and it is that. On the other hand, maybe the reporter and her editors were genuinely puzzled by the phenomenon of vibrant Christian faith in the face of tragedy. It is a form of deviant behavior. Perhaps admirable in some ways, but nonetheless deviant. It requires explanation by an expert, and the relevant expert in a therapeutic society is the psychiatrist. Enter Dr. Starr, who sympathetically explains that the Willises have not yet had time to understand what really happened. The inference is that their affirmations of Christian faith are a form of denial. Such denial disguised as faith is a common stage in the grieving process. And so forth.

The Willises, mind you, speak forthrightly about their grief and their loss. There is no evidence of denial. The sticking point with the *USA Today* people is that the Willises confidently posit the great "nonetheless"—nonetheless they are confident of God's continuing love that triumphs over tragedy. It is that apparent confidence, combined with a readiness to forgive the truck driver who caused the accident, that *USA Today* thinks needs to be explained by a psychiatrist. The "healthy" reaction to what happened to them is anger and rage against the meaninglessness of the universe. And so forth.

But it is not simply that the Willises refuse to conform to the prescribed therapeutic rituals of anger. The difficulty is with their giving a religious reason, a so very explicitly *Christian* reason, for their peace and hope in circumstances that are supposed to induce turmoil and despair. Imagine others, frequently featured in the news, who reflect tranquility when confronted by disaster. A gay man's lover has died of AIDS and he tells a reporter that he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is comforted by the hope that his friend contributed to overcoming the prejudices of a homophobic society. A white man's wife is killed in a mugging by a black man, and he calmly and eloquently bears witness to his hope for interracial understanding. In neither case, we are sure, would *USA Today* call in a psychiatrist to explain such deviant reactions to tragedy. In the cognitive world of contemporary journalism, these approved reactions are, while rare enough to deserve a word of commendation, not in need of psychiatric explanation. Indeed, to suggest that there is something not quite plausible about these reactions would be considered deeply insensitive.

It is this Christian thing that poses a puzzlement and a problem. One can imagine the exchange in the newsroom. "Yes, maybe it's true that the great majority of Americans go to church and sing songs like 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' but these Willis people seem actually to believe that stuff." "It isn't real." "Anyway, we can't go with a story that looks like it's pushing religion." "We need to get a more impartial take on this." "Better call Dr. Starr to give you something to put this in perspective." "Ah yes," says Dr. Starr, effusing professional confidence. "We frequently run across this kind of thing in the grieving process. They may well be numbed, and it may take some time for it to sink in."

Meanwhile the Rev. Willis is puzzled by the reporter's puzzlement. "We're ordinary people," he says. "This faith people keep talking about is freely available to anyone." In the cognitive world occupied by *USA Today*, it will likely take a long, long time for that to sink in.

FT

HIJACKING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Again the other day, one runs across an article that observes in passing, as though it is taken-for-granted knowledge, that the conservative trend in our political culture reflects Americans' rejection of the civil rights movement of three decades ago. This is, in our view, mischievous nonsense. What most Americans reject is the transmogrification of the civil rights movement, which was specifically directed at righting a great wrong in black-white relations, into an all-purpose movement of group victimization and special entitlements. This grotesque twisting of what is meant by civil rights has not been lost on some blacks. Writing in the influential black paper, *Chicago Defender*, Ray Scannell puts it this way.

"The attack on the character of Associate U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas by militant white feminists, in books and newspaper articles, should not be ignored by anyone concerned with the misuse of the Black American Civil Rights Movement. Media feminist activists are using allegations of personal misbehavior that are over ten years old and selective personal anecdotes to discredit the ability and judgment of a high profile professional jurist. The efforts can only be rationalized as ongoing attempts at intimidating Justice Thomas in personal behavior cases that will come before him. Character assassination aside, it is time for anyone seriously concerned with social justice to examine the damage the feminist movement has done to the Black American Civil Rights Movement. The use of administrative agency case law to license group entitlements and legal preferences has been the undoing of the movement in the post-1964 years. Equating laissez faire personal behavior as a concern for principled civil rights is a gross misinterpretation of the law. Recent sex discrimination cases resulting in large settlements, in some cases awards of multi-million dollars, to be split with aggressive trial attorneys, are the latest examples of misusing the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The increasing number of sexual misbehavior cases and the huge settlements and awards demonstrate the success of post-1964 militant feminists in co-opting the concerns of the Black American civil rights movement to advance their group self-interest for private gain."

In the mid-sixties, most of the proponents of the civil rights movement segued into the anti-Vietnam war movement, then into the more generalized counterculture, with all of its continuing sideshows of radical feminism, gay advocacy, and so forth. For many who still call themselves liberal, all these diverse and frequently contradictory movements constitute The Movement, a continuous course of progressive change. For some, it has been possible for thirty years to live in The Movement, a cognitive world impervious to both internal contradictions and challenges from the outside. Apart from the fetid backwaters of the academy, nowhere has this possibility been pressed so far as in the bureaucracies of mainline Protestantism. A friend recently returned from a meeting of United Methodist social justice executives who were evaluating the significance of the November election and reports that the conclusion seemed to be unanimous: The November election represented the last desperate hurrah of the white, male, racist establishment to perpetuate its control of American society.

Such a reading strikes most of us as amusingly implausible, but it is important to understand that there are cognitive enclaves in which it is thought to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be entirely persuasive. As Mr. Scannell and some other blacks (albeit still a minority) recognize, one real victim of this way of thinking is the legacy of the civil rights movement and the legitimate concerns of black, especially poor black, Americans. Through all the contortions of causes and ideologies that hijacked the civil rights movement, we have, after more than thirty years, moved from talking about "colored people" to talking about "people of color." It is by no means clear that this is much of an achievement, especially when "people of color" is now but one category in an endless catalogue of victimizations and entitlements. Black leaders also have much to answer for in allowing the interests of black Americans to be taken hostage by elite and well-funded organizations pushing causes unrelated to, frequently alien to, American blacks. Witness the precipitous and possibly fatal collapse of the NAACP. Latching on to the mantle of the civil rights movement gave these causes a measure of moral credibility for a time, but now they have brought discredit upon themselves and upon the movement to which they parasitically attached their ambitions.

This is a great shame, for the civil rights movement of, say, 1956 to 1964 was a luminous moment in American history. Martin Luther King, Jr., whatever problems people may have with his personal life or philosophy, is deservedly lifted up as a figure who helped remedy a great wrong in our national experience. It is not only blacks who are deprived when the movement that he led is exploited and trivialized by interest groups and ideologues intent upon embroiling America in a class warfare in which blacks are but one, and by no means the most important, of alleged victim classes.

FT

The Golden Calf of Research

Please understand that I have profound respect for you, but regrettably I must do you in. That's an attitude that bothers Daniel Callahan in "The Puzzle of Profound Respect." Callahan is president of the Hastings Center, which is a very major player in the debates over biomedical ethics. His article is occasioned by the National Institutes of Health proposal to fund producing human embryos in the laboratory solely for the purpose of research (see "The Inhuman Use of Human Beings," FT, January 1995). The report recommending such funding speaks of "the profound respect" with which we must view the embryo that we will then destroy. Such talk about profound respect, says Callahan, is "wafting incense" designed to make us feel a little better about what we're doing.

In the vulgar utilitarianism of the NIH panel's reasoning, the impermissible becomes permissible, even mandatory, if it might advance the goals of scientific research. Callahan writes: "What a free ride this is for the researchers, whose claims of potential benefits are treated with the kind of deference and credulity not seen since the days when the golden calf was worshipped. But of course for modern medicine research is the golden calf, questioned only at one's own risk. Duly reverential, the panel satisfied itself with simply listing all the research possibilities, including the improvement and increased safety of IVF, the creation of cell lines that might someday be useful for bone marrow transplantation, repair of spinal cord injuries, skin replacement and, naturally, the hint of a greater understanding of cancer."

It is time, says Callahan, to challenge the "research" mantra with a strong dose of skepticism. "The report notes that four countries already allow embryo research and that it has been going on for some years in private laboratories in this country. Yet not a single actual benefit derived so far from that research is cited to back the claims of great potential benefits from having even more of it. There is, oddly, no mention of any results whatever from that research, other than the oblique suggestion that it would be much improved if government funds could be brought to bear. Would it be unfair to conclude that either there have been no notable research benefits so far and thus the subject was finessed, or that the panel just forgot to ask? In any case, we are asked to bet on the future benefits. I wonder what odds the bookies in Las Vegas would give on this one." To give in to the supposition that research is always and in every instance a necessary thing to do is to surrender to a technological imperative that denies human freedom and may well destroy the possibility of a humane future. Callahan concludes: "Research that stays within moral limits is worthy of respect. Research that restlessly seeks to find a way around them, holding out some supposedly higher goods, is not. If there can be such a thing as modern idolatry, that is it. Can not the research community find a Moses to go after that golden calf?"

FT

Portnoy's Snit

If they understood what was happening, one might credit them with a measure of courage, or at least

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with a piquant contrariness. But the *New York Times* does not understand; the people in charge there do not, as it is said, get it. They are like the *New Yorker* movie critic who wrote in November 1972 that she did not believe Richard Nixon had been elected because she knew absolutely no one who had voted for Nixon. And so it is that the editorial page of the Sunday *Times* of December 11 led off with a long piece "In Praise of the Counterculture." The 1960s and its effluence were, we are told, a universal blessing. We would not have had the feminist movement, the gay rights movement, and a host of other improvements had it not been for the wonderful "Thoreauvian" dissenters of that era. That Thoreau was a humbug who is only kept in print by his capacity to capture the passing fancies of impressionable adolescents is neither here nor there to the editors of the *Times*, who apparently feel entitled to indulge their own impulse to throw an adolescent snit in protest against a nation that appreciates them insufficiently.

Outraged that Newt Gingrich—joined, it seems, by a majority of Americans—takes a rather dim view of "the counterculture," the *Times* lobs an in-your-face editorial at a nation that dared perpetrate an in-your-face election against the orthodoxies of the *Times* and its satellite worlds of correctitude. "In Praise of the Counterculture" could be read as the paper's letter of resignation from the world of power and influence outside midtown Manhattan. If the country is going to get uppity with the *Times*, the editors sniff, the country can just go and find itself another newspaper to tell it what to think. On the other hand, it seems improbable that the *Times* will really withdraw from "the power and the glory" of directing the affairs of the nation and the world, or at least pretending to. But one never knows.

Anna Quindlen, for one, is not going to put up with it anymore. Writing her farewell column shortly before Christmas, she says, "I leave you with good tidings of great joy: Those who shun the prevailing winds of cynicism and anomie can truly fly." So there goes Ms. Quindlen flying far away from the ugly thing that America has become. But not before she thanks "a newspaper that stands for the very best that newspapers can provide," and offers us some final ponderings on what she called "the great issues of the day." The great issue of her final column is how she could remain such a wonderful person over all these years. "For more than twenty years I've been a reporter, a job that people say is sure to make you cynical and has somehow only left me more idealistic." It is with her, she explains, as it was with Anne Frank who, less than a year away from death in Bergen-Belson, wrote in her diary, "In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart." Unlike Anne Frank, Ms. Quindlen is only going off to New Jersey, but the Republicans are in control there, too. She is generous in sharing with us what she has learned: "That is the most important thing I have learned in the newspaper business, that our business is one another." Brushing away a tear, one is comforted by the thought that others are left to carry on in the tradition of Anna Quindlen.

Columnist Frank Rich, for example.

President Clinton dismissed the Surgeon General Joycelin Elders for advocating, or seeming to advocate, the teaching of masturbation skills to the country's sexually challenged youngsters. In response, the Sunday *Times* of December 18 carried no less than two pieces in praise of masturbation. Frank Rich boldly and imaginatively entitled his article, wouldn't you know it, "The Last Taboo." (Incest was last year.) After the obligatory observations on Dr. Elders being a black and a woman (and we all know what America does to blacks and women), he lauds her for daring to speak "the dreaded M-word." Mr. Rich notes that sophisticated folk such as D. H. Lawrence, Woody Allen, and Philip Roth have given masturbation an honorable place in our high culture. *Portnoy's Complaint*, there are no doubt those who still remember, was largely about the bathroom fantasies of a boy who had big problems with his father.

Mr. Rich does not claim onanism is the most elevated form of sexual expression. He cites the observation of Mark Twain that "Of all the various kinds of sexual intercourse this has the least to recommend it." Among the problems with masturbation noted by Twain, "It is unsuited to the drawing room." With an entirely straight face, indeed with moral earnestness, Frank Rich continues in that idealistic vein for which Anna Quindlen was so admired by herself: "Perhaps these drawbacks are still troublesome today, but they are nothing next to such alternatives as unwanted babies or disease. That was the only point Joycelyn Elders was trying to make, and precisely because it cost her her job, this time it may finally get through." If we got him right, Mr. Rich finds it troublesome that masturbation is still thought to be unsuited to the drawing room, but if we encouraged a lot more of it there would be fewer unwanted babies and less disease. Dr. Elders said she wanted to educate the American people, and it appears she succeeded with a few, an inordinate number of whom are children of the counterculture working at what used to be called the nation's newspaper of record.

FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

While We're At It

■ Speaking to students at Cornell recently, I was struck by a young woman who kept saying of some Intervarsity students who were there, "I just can't get into their universe." I was reminded of that by an A. N. Wilson column in the *Spectator*. Wilson, readers may recall, was an atheist, was converted, became something of a Christian apologist, wrote a curious biography of C. S. Lewis, and then went back to being an atheist, except this time of the very noisy variety. In his column he deplores the number of public figures—cabinet ministers, bishops, and now the Prince of Wales—who are going in for rather ostentatious public confessions. The whole thing reminds Wilson of "what it would be like to attend one of those Buchmanite meetings of the Oxford Groupers in the 1930s. (A friend of mine once attended a meeting of theirs at the Randolph Hotel and slipped out of the back having heard a burly Rhodes Scholar tearfully acknowledge that he was in the habit of blowing his nose on his bath towel.) Much as I admire the daring of all those seized with the confessional urge, I find it baffling. 'I do not recall committing a single blameworthy act,' Ivy Compton-Burnett once said. I could not quite echo this, but it is closer to my position than that of the new breast-beating school. Surely if one is a well-balanced person one simply does not do things one considers to be wrong." Imagine that. No sin, no confession, no need for forgiveness. As the young woman at Cornell would say, I just can't get into his universe. In the view of "well-balanced" persons such as A. N. Wilson, just as well, no doubt.

■ Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, applied for a trademark for its logo. When the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office published a list of trademark requests, the application was challenged by the Calvin Klein Inc. clothing company. The challenge was withdrawn when it was explained to the lawyers that Calvin was on the scene before Klein, but the incident got Martin Marty of the University of Chicago to pondering. "All kinds of parallel possibilities come to mind; a word gets uprooted from its tradition, and ends up seeming unfamiliar," Marty observes. It says something, he thinks, about a culture that suffers from severe amnesia, especially when it comes to religion. "Other lower-case Christian words may be in trouble: Cross pens might want a monopoly on the cross as a logo, and Christians might have to hire lawyers to win it back. Even 'Christian' itself is not safe in the world of commerce: the Christian Dior fashion-design firm has a patent on its name and may think that the 1.8 billion people called Christian are intruding into the domain where money is to be made. I advise these people to get a good lawyer."

■ A group called Christians in Political Science had a meeting in Washington some time ago that was addressed by A. James Reichley of Georgetown University. Among many other important things, he said this: "Christians live in a world in which miracles sometimes happen, in which prayers are heard and are answered—though often in ways different than we had expected. Most importantly, we view the whole of reality as pervaded by moral purpose and meaning. This is quite different from Alfred North Whitehead's description of the physical universe assumed by natural science: 'A dull affair, soundless, scentless, colorless, merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly.' Whitehead went on: 'No alternative system of organizing scientific truth has been suggested. It is not only reigning, but it is without a rival.' But he added: 'And yet—it is quite unbelievable.'" Reichley concludes: "Let me emphasize that we do not value Christianity primarily as a cultural support for democracy or a market economy. Our primary loyalty is to God and to God's word and to God's work. But the fact is that experience has now shown that a healthy free society is unlikely to be built on any base but the biblical tradition—at least it has not been shown that this is possible in the West."

■ George Marsden, the noted evangelical scholar, has done pioneering work on religion and higher education. His recent *The Soul of the American University*, portions of which first appeared in these pages (FT, January 1991), is receiving well-warranted attention among educators in both religious and secular schools. As a Protestant, Marsden is concerned also with what is happening in Catholic higher education, as he makes clear in reviewing David J. O'Brien's *From the Heart of the American Church: Catholic Higher Education and American Culture* (Orbis). O'Brien's title, of course, is a play on *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (from the heart of the Church), a recent Vatican document calling on Catholic colleges and universities to be more distinctively Catholic. Marsden notes that Catholic academics in America are made extremely nervous by talk about Catholic "distinctiveness." It immediately reduces them to shouting mantras such as "academic freedom," "diversity," "the spirit of Vatican II," and "One Charlie Curran is enough." (The last meets with widespread agreement far beyond the academy.) David O'Brien, Marsden writes, "rejects the option of Catholic 'distinctiveness,' which 'is what got us in trouble in the first place.' Religion, he says should be understood as 'the search for meaning and value.' The engagement with America must always be positive, with emphases on cooperation and dialogue that promote justice and good citizenship." Marsden, however, has heard all this before. He observes, "Without some sense of real tension between the church and the rest of culture to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

complement a sense of a transforming cultural mission [dialogue, etc.], there will be little way to sustain the religious sensibilities that can turn these ideas into more than conventional rhetoric. O'Brien's proposals seem to follow the path taken by mainline Protestants earlier in the century, when the mission of the churches was so blended with citizenship and morality that the churches became superfluous to the mix." Marsden confesses that he doesn't know exactly what must be done if Catholic higher education is not to go the way once-Protestant colleges and universities have gone, but he does know that "positive new steps must be taken to counter the paralyzing negative reactions to Catholic distinctiveness that haunt so many intellectuals in the American Catholic community."

■ A few more findings from that Richard Wirthlin poll done for the National Right to Life Committee. We've been tracking survey research on abortion for more than twenty years, but the Wirthlin poll adds a few new wrinkles. The question is asked, "Which one of the following statements most closely describes your personal position on the issue of abortion?" Prohibit in all circumstances (9 percent), except to save life of mother (11 percent), except in cases of rape, incest, or save life of mother (33 percent). Counting those positions as pro-life, 53 percent of the general population and 51 percent of those who voted in November are "pro-life." On the other side the figures are these: Legal abortion in first three months of pregnancy (27 percent), legal in first six months (5 percent), legal any time (9 percent). By these reckonings, 41 percent of the general population and 43 percent of those who voted in November are pro-choice. (Others "don't know" or refused to answer.) The abortion license of *Roe v. Wade*, of course, makes abortion legal at any time during a pregnancy—a position supported by only 9 percent of the general population and 11 percent of those who voted. The platform position of the Republican Party is pro-life. The question was asked, "If the Republican party were to change their official position on the issue of abortion, would you be more or less likely to support Republican candidates?" Of the voters, 28 percent said they would be more likely to vote Republican, 40 percent said they would be less likely. A powerful caution, it would seem, against the Christine Whitman-Bill Weld-Pete Wilson proposal that the party back off from abortion. Another finding indicated that, if the presidential candidates of both parties are pro-choice, there is no advantage to either, but if the Republican is pro-life and the Democrat is pro-choice, the Republican has an 8 percent advantage. All these findings are politically important, no doubt, but perhaps the most interesting is that only 9 percent of the American people support the regime of *Roe v. Wade*. In years past that figure has varied from 15 to 20 percent. Given that the question asked was pretty much the standard one, it seems that support for abortion on demand is significantly slipping. Keep in mind, however, that other surveys have shown that less than one in ten Americans knows that *Roe* legalized abortion at any time during a pregnancy. A continuing task of the pro-life movement is not simply to present the arguments against *Roe* but to inform the public about what *Roe* actually did to abortion law in America.

■ *The Sunday Visitor* is the diocesan paper of Lafayette, Indiana. But now they've changed it to *The Catholic Moment*. In the editorial announcing the change, they note that they asked for my permission and they said some nice things about your scribe. Permission? We're pleased as punch. Frequent contributor Hadley Arkes of Amherst never fails to remind us of his book *First Things* (Princeton). When he refers to us, it is always very pointedly as "FIRST THINGS, the journal." In truth, we think he's pleased as punch, too. The fact is you don't need permission for titles; they can't be copyrighted. Anyone can, for instance, publish a novel titled *Moby Dick*, so long as they put their name (or pseudonym) on it. But you can't use the pseudonym "Herman Melville." So why are we mentioning this? You think everything in these pages has to have a point?

■ "Mormons Ban *Schindler's List*." That's how the story played, but it is not quite the case. The case is that Brigham Young University has a movie theater in its student union building, and the university has a long-standing policy of not showing R-rated films there. When they do show films that have an R rating, they edit out the offending violence, nudity, or whatever. Only after they had announced *Schindler's List* did they learn that Steven Spielberg and his friends would allow no editing whatever. Our friend Bruce Hafen, Provost of BYU, has written to explain that they were then "forced to make an embarrassingly public choice between an institutional standard to which we had never made an exception and a significant film that addressed issues of great importance to our students." He adds, "BYU's institutional unwillingness to endorse any unedited R movie stems from the conviction that Hollywood should find ways to make its films—regardless of the intrinsic value of the subject matter—in ways that respect the boundaries of public propriety that existed before what Walter Berns calls 'the publification of sex.'" Good for BYU. Of course students are free to go see the movie off campus. As for the suggestion that BYU has something against dealing with the Holocaust, Dr. Hafen notes that this year the 25th anniversary meeting of the international Annual Scholars Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches will be hosted by BYU.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

■ "A statistician is someone who is good with figures but who doesn't have the personality to become an accountant." The source for that is the most quotable person who ever lived, "Anonymous." But we got it from *The "Quote . . . Unquote" Newsletter*, available from The Executive Speaker Co., Box 292437, Dayton, OH 45429. The same publication has a little article on "God grant me the serenity to accept. . . ." Commonly called the AA prayer, it was allegedy written by Reinhold Niebuhr who, according to *Quote . . . Unquote*, sometimes claimed and sometimes denied authorship. Their conclusion: "God give us the serenity to see that it doesn't really matter who wrote it. It exists, and many people obviously find it very helpful."

■ The meeting that marked the first anniversary of the much-discussed RE-Imagining conference in Minneapolis attracted several hundred feminists and featured what were billed as prominent theologians. Embattled defenders of the November 1993 conference insisted, according to the *National Christian Reporter*, on "the women's right to meet, explore the Christian faith, and examine existing and emerging theological precepts." A taste of the "precepts" being explored was offered by Rita Nakashima Brock of the Methodist-related Hamline University in St. Paul, Minn. Ms. Brock explained: "Abusive systems look for scapegoats or people to blame for a problem. Is the question so much who killed Jesus as what killed him? . . . Is the answer our sin or the huge oppressive and exploitative system of power he lived within? If we say Jesus' death was necessary to save us, does that put us in a position of being grateful he suffered?" At the risk of shocking those who are exploring the outer edges of theological precepts, yes, ladies, that is pretty much the position that Christians think they've been in from the beginning. As Saint Paul acknowledged, it is somewhat of a scandal, and perhaps even more so for those who work so hard at scandalizing Christians who know and believe the basics of the faith.

■ A new international journal has been announced by the Institute for the Study of Christianity and Sexuality. It will be called *Theology and Sexuality* and the publisher, Sheffield Academic Press, promises that it will be "exciting and innovative, with creative and imaginative styles of scholarship." No doubt.

■ Tom Kuntz writes this article titled "The Rage to Kill Those Who Kill." It's all about the alleged frenzy of the American people in favor of capital punishment. "Will all this killing do any good?" asks Mr. Kuntz. "Will it deter crime? Is it cost effective? Or are we simply talking about retribution here—real Old Testament stuff?" Were it not in the *New York Times*, someone might suspect that we're simply talking anti-Semitism here.

■ One can hardly count the number of editorials and other commentaries deploring the nasty, ugly, hateful rhetoric now current in our political life. They are all right, of course. Here for instance is a speech given by the Rev. Jesse Jackson in New York and Chicago in which he compares the Christian Coalition to Nazis, slave owners, and Jim Crow segregationists. "The ideological kinship is right down through the years," says Mr. Jackson. "It's not a personal thing. They've been rather consistent in opposing remedies to historical errors." "The Christian Coalition was a strong force in Germany" (when the Nazis came to power). Responding to critics who took issue with his remarks, Mr. Jackson explained, "I don't want these statements to be misinterpreted. I'm not seeking a confrontation. I'm seeking understanding. I'm seeking an end to polarization."

■ The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention is doing a very nice series of pamphlets under the title "Sanctity of Human Life." The latest is an eighteen-page reflection on "The Ethics of Human Embryo Research and the Brave New World." Write the Commission at 901 Commerce, #550, Nashville, TN 37203.

■ Naperville, Illinois, is one of thousands of towns where churches are encouraging the movement in which teenagers take a vow to remain virgins until marriage. This fascinated Mary Gaitskill, who went out to Naperville to investigate, and to write up her findings in *Elle*, a fashion magazine. (No, we don't read everything, but readers do send things in.) Ms. Gaitskill apparently made a pretty raunchy time of her teen years, and she finds herself surprisingly sympathetic to the young people today who want to avoid the mistakes she and others made. Although, as the fashion magazine genre apparently requires, she makes clear that she is not able to get into the Christian thing embraced by these kids in Naperville. The article is typical of the way liberals who risk being sensible go to great pains to make clear that they are not becoming conservative. It has a nice self-deprecating ending, however. She tells her mother about the article she's been writing, and her mother asks her, if she had teenage kids, what would she tell them about sex? "Well, I said, I would tell them that before they had sex they should be sure they're able to deal with their feelings about it. That they should be careful to ascertain what their real feelings are instead of acting on ideas of how they should feel. That they can feel all kinds of things." "Okay," her mother said. "But I mean, what would you tell them?"

■ So here we suggested (November 1994) that Rabbi Marc Gellman had come up with the one thing that all religions, without exception, had in common—all use candles. Then comes this one sentence note

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from Dr. Lloyd Eby of Washington, D.C.: "The Mennonites I came from did *not* use candles." So much for that hypothesis, Rabbi.

■ Commentary on the dismal state of Catholic preaching is a commonplace. There are exceptions, of course, but the general picture seems not to be encouraging. The Second Vatican Council's emphasis on the importance of the homily (Catholics shy away from "sermon") in every Mass could not, of course, create instant competence for what was mandated. All kinds of homily services cropped up, some offering "hints" and "helps," and others selling complete texts that are sometimes read by priests verbatim. The quality of homily services ranges from the banal to the brilliant, with occasional slips into the heretical. For instance, a reader in Grand Rapids, Michigan, sends us the "Homily Helps" for Tuesday of the Second Week of Advent from a service published by St. Anthony Messenger Press. The text is Matthew 18 with its warning about offending against one of these little ones who believe in Christ. To the St. Anthony author, this suggests, quite inexplicably, a homily on the need for the Church to provide housing for the elderly. Which leads to this: "A fraction of the resources we devote to the unborn redirected to the end of life could result in facilities for the elderly that would be a model for the nation." One imagines Father, not yet fully awake, at the early morning Mass reading that and then thinking to himself, "What on earth did I just say?" Or devout Mr. McNaughton in the pew: "What on earth is he going on about now?" Then there was the homily service we glanced at while saying Mass in an upstate New York parish. The day was St. Matthias, celebrating the disciple chosen to take the place of Judas. The "homily suggestion" was that Our Lord's original choice of Judas "shows that God can make mistakes, too." We find ourselves hesitant to suggest that Catholic preaching would be greatly improved by burning all the homily services, but we are not quite sure why.

■ From Bloomington, Indiana, a reader reports seeing this sticker on a carry-on bag at the airport: "Keep a woman's right to choose—unless George Bush volunteers to babysit." The reader asks, "How can anyone trivialize abortion like that?" The answer is that those who support the abortion license have no choice. Not to trivialize choice is to run the risk of thinking about what is chosen.

■ You don't have to be a rocket scientist, as it is said, to know that the two-parent family is far superior to any alternative. But it does take a modicum of courage to counter arguments that, as George Orwell remarked, only intellectuals could believe. "The Social Significance of the Traditional Two-Parent Family: The Impact of Its Breakdown on the Lives of Children, Adults, and Societies" reinforces courage with an excellent summary of the pertinent findings from social science. In every area—education, law-abidingness, health, and life chances generally—children raised in two-parent families do dramatically better than others. Alright, so you already knew that. But if you find yourself in the position of having to prove the obvious to the obdurate, you might want to get the report from Glenn T. Stanton at Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, CO 80995.

■ Protestants, notably evangelical and pentecostal Protestants, give more generously to their churches than do Catholics. Responding to this reality, and getting real about priorities, Msgr. Joseph Champlin, well-known writer and lecturer, told the diocesan paper of St. Cloud, Minn., "The big question is not about the ordination of women or married clergy or the decline in clergy or pedophilia or abortion or assisted suicide. All are vital questions, but money is the crucial one because without money we simply cannot carry on all the things that need to be done in a vital parish." Seek ye first a balanced budget. . . .

■ Noticing that those going to abortion clinics tend to shy away from sidewalk counselors, picketers, and even rosary-reciters, Mariam Bell of Annandale, Virginia, came up with a different idea. Outside the clinic, she and her husband and friends set up checkered-cloth-covered tables to which are attached brightly colored helium balloons and a banner proclaiming "Choose Adoption" and "We Care About You." They offer free coffee and packets of information on adoption. The appeal is strengthened by the presence of couples eager to adopt children. Most important, this approach works in dissuading pregnant women from killing their children. For more information on how they do it, Mariam Bell may be contacted at 4617 Columbia Rd., Annandale, VA 22003, (703) 941-2788. For more information on adoption in general, the National Council on Adoption (202) 328-1200.

■ The translation is a bit rough, but the words are clear and encouraging. When last December the trouble began to brew between Chechnya and Moscow, some observers saw a major Christian-Muslim conflict in the offing. In order to avoid that, Alexy II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, joined with Alsabekov, Grand Mufti of the Chechen Republic, in issuing a statement that included this: "We categorically reject the very idea that the conflict around Chechnya can develop into the Christian-Moslem opposition. The true followers of the two religions only desire peace. The use of sacred Christian and Moslem symbols and concepts with the purpose of stirring up enmity and provoking conflict between religions is a sin and an illegality in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the face of God. We ask all our brothers and sisters—Christians, Moslems, people of good will—all those who are involved now in the conflict unpleasant to God—to stop and to change their mind. We call our flock to pray that peace may return to the land of Chechnya." Cynics may observe that praying for peace is one thing, securing it is quite another. But even they must acknowledge the benefit to peace in heading off what could become also a religious war.

■ As noted last month, in his Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, President Clinton wished us, inter alia, a "meaningful work experience." Then came his Kwanzaa Message. Kwanzaa, most readers will recall, is a recently contrived African American seven-day celebration that runs from December 26 through January 1, and has been much criticized by blacks and others as a commercial gimmick designed to demonstrate that blacks can be as consumerist as anybody else. Anyway, the presidential blather (for no other word will do) goes like this: "A vibrant and energizing celebration, Kwanzaa offers millions an opportunity to embrace the rich cultural traditions of the African heritage." Yes, dear reader, we feel your pain. The President continues: "The seven principles of Kwanzaa — unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith — serve as vital tools in building hope and opportunity in our communities and throughout our country." With "principles" like creativity and faith, you can hardly go wrong. The message ends with greetings from Hillary. The politics of demeaning, as it were.

■ A hard-core Thomist, I have come to believe, is someone who believes that Thomism is the hardware that will run any software. Professor Ralph McInerny of Notre Dame is a hard-core Thomist. He is saved from the extremes of this affliction by possessing also a rare aesthetic temperament and impressive literary gifts (also in the writing of many mystery stories). If I needed an excuse for thinking pleasant thoughts about Ralph McInerny, which I don't, a recent comment by him on Harold Bloom would provide it. McInerny very much likes much of what Bloom does in his recent book *The Western Canon*. For instance, Bloom vigorously and with wondrous erudition defends the notion of excellence against the barbaric multiculturalists and radical feminists in our midst, but McInerny suggests that there is an awful emptiness at the heart of Bloom's project. Comparing Bloom with T. S. Eliot and C. S. Lewis, McInerny observes: "Eliot's Christianity was not merely a personal patina; it had relevance for his poetry and for his criticism as well. It enabled Eliot to see the wellsprings of most of the great works of Western literature. Lewis accounted it a bonus of his conversion that he had come to share the faith that animated the writers whose works he studied. I am sure that Eliot saw faith as a bonus for poetic creation as well. One of the results of secularism, in a man of Bloom's sensibility, is the effort to turn literature itself into a religion. One gets the picture of a disheveled distracted scholar, moving from canonical work to canonical work, in quest of the meaning of life. But the meaning he finds in his reading is not the meaning of life that those great works convey. Bloom is engaged in a quest without transcendent object, a poring over books, and makes of aesthetic experience, itself as painful as it is pleasurable, the purpose of life. Call this the loose canon. The great works unmoored and set afloat. One is reminded of the author of another Bloom who dreamt of creating in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race. Joyce meant a substitute for faith. That seems to be what literature is for Harold Bloom."

■ There are fellowships for ten American students to participate in a three-week seminar in Krakow, Poland, on "The Free Society and Centesimus Annus," July 3 through 22. Faculty includes Michael Novak, George Weigel, Russell Hittinger, and this scribe, plus guest lectures by Polish religious and political leaders. Fellowships cover tuition, lodging (at a twelfth-century Dominican priory), meals, and excursions. Students pay airfare. Fellowships are open to graduate students or upcoming college seniors. To apply, send c.v., writing sample, and 300-word essay on liberty to Mr. Brian Anderson at American Enterprise Institute, 1150 17th Street NW, Washington D.C. 20036. This is the fourth year we've done this, and it is both great fun and a splendid learning experience. Aside from the ten Americans, the students are from Central and Eastern Europe and are typically excited by the challenge of rebuilding their world after the catastrophe of communism.

■ "Thank God we do teach secularism in our public schools," writes Richard Marius, director of Harvard's Expository Writing Program. "Secularism, with its appeal to rationality, undermines inflexible religious principles," he claims. For Marius, it seems, almost any religious believer is a "fundamentalist." He discusses a case in Stephen Bates' book *Battleground* in which a Christian mother protests what she believes to be anti-Christian teaching in the public schools. Marius asks, "Can we prove that she is 'irrational' in standing up for her principles? Maybe not." But, then, maybe so. Marius, writing in *Harvard Magazine*, joins philosopher Robert Nozick in saying that the mark of rationality is that it is always dissatisfied with itself, or, as Nozick puts it, rationality "requires imagination." Fundamentalism fails on this score, Marius believes. "For fundamentalists, alternatives are sin. Fundamentalism requires the suppression of the imagination. I've always suspected that most

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fundamentalists are atheists at the core, living in terror of losing their faith. Given freedom, they acknowledge, most people will choose not to be fundamentalists." Certainly those whom Mr. Marius calls fundamentalists appear to threaten the inflexible principles of his secularism. His polemic bears all the marks of someone who believes he has had a narrow escape from a fundamentalist childhood and is living in terror of losing his liberation. That being said, however, there are no doubt supra-orthodox Christians (and Jews and Muslims and others) who have little confidence that "their" truth can engage and comprehend truths appearing from elsewhere. The alternative to such fear-filled religious rigidity is not a vacuous secular "rationality" premised upon nothing but dissatisfaction with itself. The alternative is an uncompromisingly reasonable faith, which is to say a faith-filled confidence that all truth is finally one because God is One. Explaining that to inflexible secularists is no easy task, so great is their terror of religion, which they view as the enemy of their ever so fragile freedom. In many cases it is not too much to say that hostility to religion defines their freedom, with the ironic result that religion defines their freedom. It must always be a fragile freedom that is hostage to what it hates.

Sources: Alister E. McGrath on the new Catholic Catechism, *Christianity Today*, December 12, 1994. Luke Timothy Johnson on John Meier's *A Marginal Jew* in *Commonweal*, November 18, 1994. On the Rev. Scott Willis, *USA Today*, November 23, 1994. Ray Scannell on attacks against Clarence Thomas, *Chicago Defender*, November 30, 1994. Daniel Callahan on research, *Hastings Center Report*, January-February 1995. Anna Quindlen farewell column, *New York Times*, December 14, 1994.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT: A. N. Wilson column in the *Spectator*, November 12, 1994. Martin Marty on commercialization of Christian symbols, *Christian Century*, November 9, 1994. A. James Reichley address to Christians in Political Science, *CPS Newsletter*, Fall 1994. George Marsden review of David O'Brien book, *Commonweal*, November 18, 1994. Statistics on public opinion regarding abortion, *National Right to Life News*, November 18, 1994. *Sunday Visitor* name change announced in November 20, 1994 issue. On RE-Imagining conference in Minneapolis, *National Christian Reporter*, November 11, 1994. Reference to *Theology and Sexuality* in *Touchstone*, Fall 1994. Tom Kuntz on capital punishment, *New York Times*, December 4, 1994. Jesse Jackson quoted on Christian Coalition. *Washington Times*, December 9, 1994. On telling teenagers about sex, *Elle*, December 1994. Msgr. Joseph Champlin on money, *Catholic Trends*, December 17, 1994. On Mariam Bell, *Life Insight*, December 1994. President's Kwanzaa Message reported in the *Washington Post*, December 26, 1994. Ralph McInerny on Harold Bloom, *Crisis*, November 1994. Richard Marius on rationality, *Harvard Magazine*, November-December 1993.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Bold, fresh, timely & practical. This superb book from a leading evangelical thinker captures both the promise and the peril of evangelicalism." OS GUINNESS

"Proposes strategies that will avert the collapse suffered by the mainline liberal Protestant denominations."
CARL E. BRAATEN

"McGrath gives us a wide-ranging and well-informed assessment.... Evangelicals and nonevangelicals alike should read it; they will be struck, as I have, by its honesty, wisdom and confidence."
JOHN R. W. STOTT

"In this consistently brilliant book, Alister McGrath distills an evangelicalism come of age. ... Here is a landmark to guide God's people and a land mine to explode compromising confusion within as well as outside the evangelical world of today."
J. I. PACKER

Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity

ALISTER McGRATH

209 pages, cloth, 0-8308-1694-1, $16.99

"This is a helpful book. It is invaluable for those who are trying to chart a course for evangelicals in the next century."
JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE

"A purified evangelicalism, McGrath suggests, could extend its intellectual and spiritual high ground throughout Western civilization."
CARL F. H. HENRY

"A ringing manifesto full of hope, sanity and biblical balance."
RON SIDER

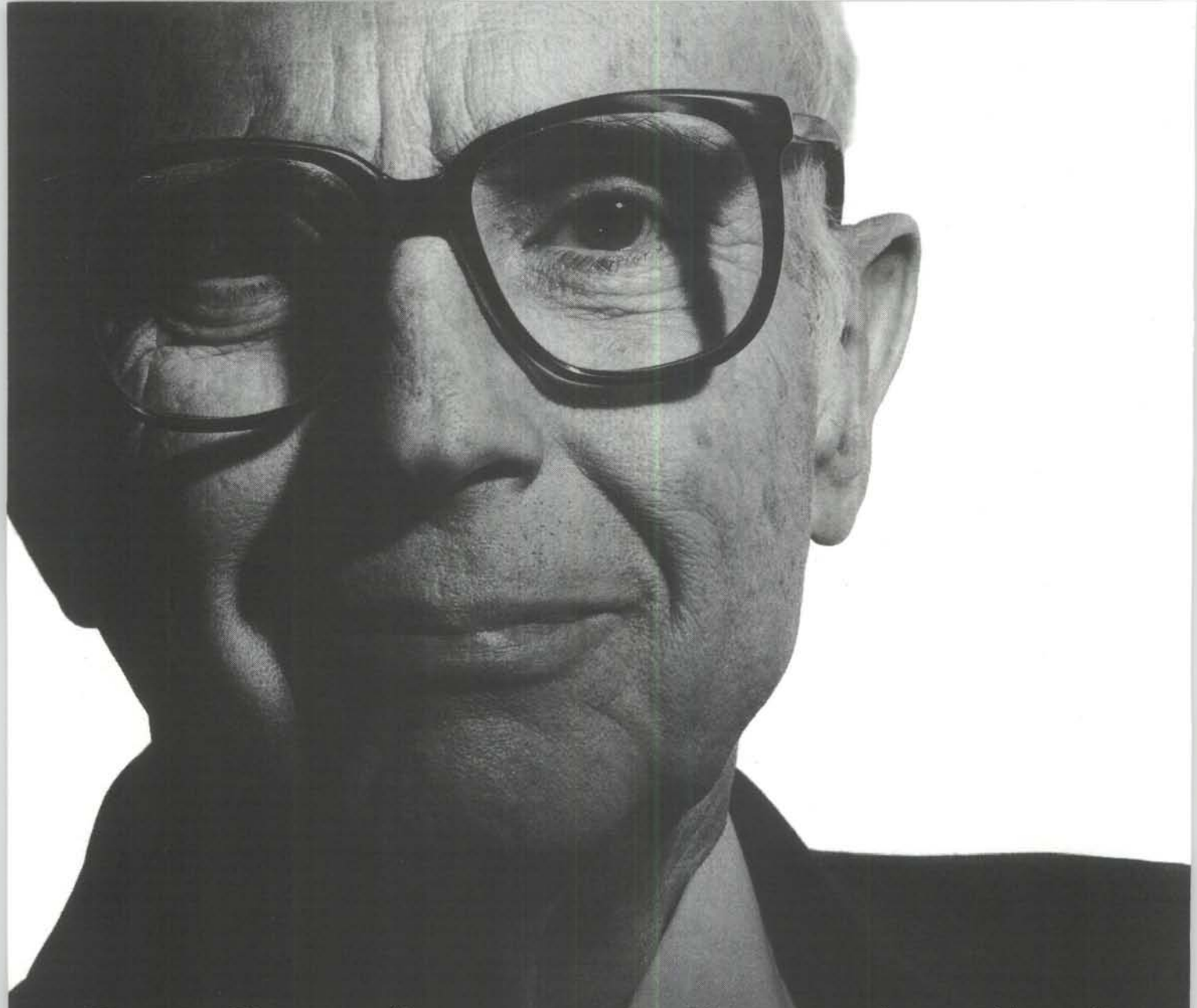
"Outstanding. *Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity* ... is exemplary in its combination of buoyant faith and constructive critical assessment."
CHRISTIANITY TODAY

Available at your local Christian bookstore or from

INTERVARSITY PRESS

DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



No guts. No story. He came to us some 40 years ago. A man of boundless energy. Filled with ideas about how a business magazine should be written. Good reporting. Brevity. Originality. These were the essential ingredients. But he understood that writing is more than a matter of words. It's a matter of character. The courage to be contrary. To take on the tough pieces. To bear up under the often oppressive weight of conventional wisdom. And for four decades now, he's done more than preach these beliefs. He's practiced them. And for this we owe him a lifetime of gratitude.

Jim Michaels, editor of Forbes, recently received the Gerald Loeb Lifetime Achievement Award for Business and Financial Journalism.

Forbes

CAPITALIST TOOL®

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED